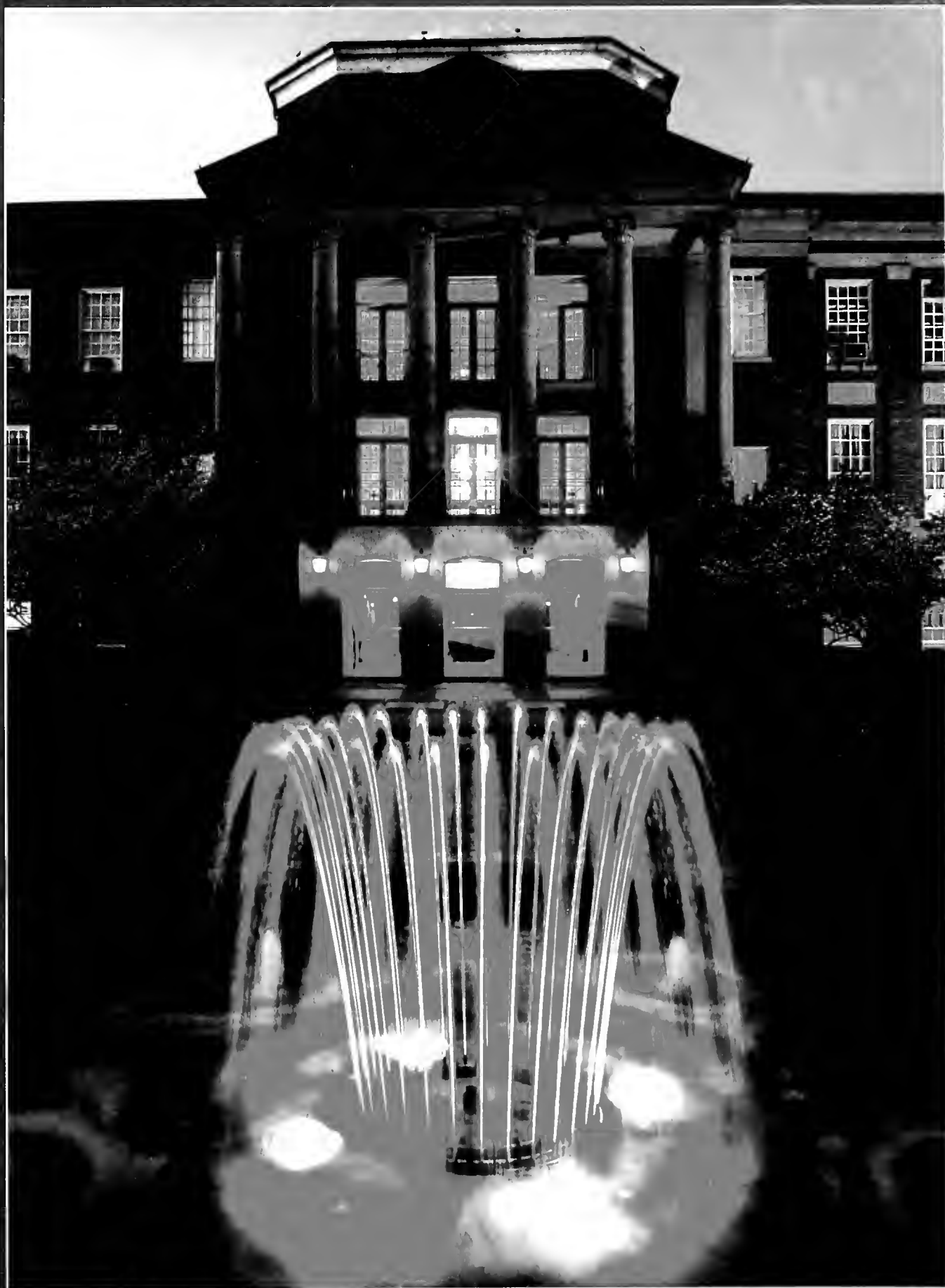


meredithcollege



Images: A Centennial Journey

By Suzanne Britt
Photographs by Chip Henderson



Readers know Suzanne Britt by her essays in the *New York Times*; *Newsweek*; *Boston Globe*; *Reader's Digest*; *Newsday*; *Books & Religion*; *The Communicant*; and numerous textbooks in the United States and Canada.

They know her by her books—*Skinny People*; *Dull and Crunchy Like Carrots*; *Show and Tell*; and *A Writer's Rhetoric*.

They know her by her columns which have appeared over the last fifteen years in the *News and Observer*; *North Carolina Homes & Gardens*; *Pickens Dispatch*; and the *Leader*.

Readers of Meredith publications know her for her regular contributions to *Meredith*, the college magazine—particularly by her column "MindSight." They know her by her poetry in the *Meridian*, a literary magazine edited and published by students.

Suzanne Britt joined the Meredith faculty in 1987 after having taught at North Carolina State University and at Duke Divinity School. She earned the B.A. at Salem College and the M.A. at Washington University.

She embodies the good that is Meredith—in the classroom, as she teaches in the Department of English; in the Office of Publications, as she expresses her talent as an editor as well as a writer; and in the public forum, as she speaks to student groups, such as Kappa Nu Sigma; or to college-related groups, such as the Wake County Chapter of the Alumnae Association.

In *Images: A Centennial Journey*, the breadth and height and depth and spirit of the College unfold in the words of this teacher...this philosopher...this historian...this writer of Meredith prose.

Cover photo: The Shaw Fountain and Johnson Hall, the administration building, illuminate Meredith's front campus. Photography by Chip Henderson.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream,
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.*
— William Wordsworth
Ode: Intimations of Immortality

When Wordsworth wrote these lines in 1802, it would be thirty years before Daguerre discovered that images could be fixed successfully to silver plates. To those of us living in the latter part of the twentieth century, the combination of words and photographs is a regular part of any day—whether we browse through a local newspaper, peruse a magazine or catalogue, look idly at a television program, study a textbook, or put together a scrapbook. We can employ the work of professionals or laugh at our own efforts to record in words or photographs the places and the people dear to us. These personal records often provide a vantage point from which to view our private histories.

But public occasions call for a more systematic and sweeping view. Filmmakers employ techniques such as establishing shots, anticipatory setups, or bird's eye views to give their audiences a sense of the "lay of the land." They also use close-ups to record details important to plot or character. In the pages that follow, readers will find both the long view and the intimate detail, the shapes and the shadows, the history and the hope of Meredith College. And they will hear the voices of many of the people who have lived the stories included here.

The storytellers are in some cases the early founders of the college; in others, its current inhabitants. Some records come from college archives and publications. Other information comes from sharp memories and affectionate hearts. Whatever the source, it is clearly revealed in the text.

What is not found there is the story of the writing and publication of this book. In 1988, President John E. Weems appointed the Executive Board of the Centennial Commission: Anne Dahle, Janet Freeman, Blue Greenberg, Carolyn Grubbs, Brent Pitts, Carolyn Robinson, Betty Webb, and Jean Jackson. Early in its meetings, this group decided that it wanted a fine volume of essays and photographs published in honor of the centennial of Meredith's charter. But decision and desire are only prelude. Next, the Publications Committee of the Centennial Commission took on the task of investigating the project. This committee, chaired by Carolyn Robinson, believed the book a good idea and began to investigate costs and to select a writer and principal photographer. President Weems encouraged the committee to determine the marketability of the book; plans were announced for its publication at the Annual Meeting of the Alumnae Association and Class Day of 1990. Orders poured in, and additional orders were placed in response to advertisements in *Meredith*, *Meredith Writes Home*, and *Angels Aware*; thus, alumnae, students, and friends of Meredith demonstrated that they wanted this book to become a reality.

Many people, in addition to the Executive Board, have helped it become so, including John Weems, Charles Taylor, Doris Litchfield, Ione Kemp Knight, Robin Colby, Nona Short, Caroline McCall, Dru Hinsley, Steve Wilson, Bill Norton, Jeannie Morelock, Carolyn Hill, JoAnne Cota, Bill Wade, Ruth Balla, Craig Greene, Catherine Moore, Clara Bunn, Elaine Harbison, Adrienne Dyson, Kim Dennie, Crystal Pike, Ted Waller, Kelly Morris Roberts, Martha Lou Stephenson, Alyson Honeycutt Coburn, Tracy Sternberg, Christy Sizemore, Sandra Flynt Canipe, Suzanne Bagnol Britt, and Mimi Holt, as well as all those persons named in the pages or featured in the photographs which follow. Many of those photographs represent the eye, craftsmanship, and artistry of Chip Henderson. Without him, the book would certainly look different; without his business acumen, the book would likely still be only a good idea.

But to no one does this work owe its life more than to Suzanne Britt. It is her creation above all: its outline, scope, clarity, and soul—all reflect the professionalism she brought to it. A quick wit, sharp mind, loving heart—attributes typically shown in her writing—were focused for one year on Meredith. We are indeed grateful to her for the application of her considerable gifts in seeing that this book would be a fitting tribute

to the college in its centennial year. It is to her that we owe our chance to see this place “apparelled in celestial Light,” perhaps not as we first knew it but with the added beauty attained by tranquil recollection.

Jean Jackson, Director
Meredith College Centennial Commission
May 1991



*This world's no blot
for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means
good. . . .*

— Robert Browning
Fra Lippo Lippi



Why does a world mean? It means, first, because it is a world, with all the passion, intelligence, conflict, and abiding love of our first homes, original families.



It means, too, because the world's colors, trees, grasses, waters, skies, faces, minds, and hearts scatter abroad an ineffable divinity. Radiance is everywhere if we know where to look and how to see. Failing to catch even the faintest glimmer of this light, we are doomed to darkness and to ignorance. And so we go searching through many worlds for the one true light, the light that gives meaning to the whole of existence.

Meredith College is a world of light and meaning—not the world its women were born into by chance but, rather, a world searched for, singled out, *chosen* when the time has come for such choices. For generations of Meredith women, this campus world has meant “intensely,” and meant good. Inner lights—faith, a desire to learn, a solitary search for identity—all these have led Meredith's women to come to this place, in this time, and at this crisis of decision—the landmark year between random, careless youth and thoughtful, conscious maturity—to discover for themselves the whispered dreams in Meredith's lovely campus, the secret

wisdom in its humming corridors and classrooms, the bright promise in its stately chapel. The light that shines today is the same light that irradiated the purposes and plans of Meredith College's Baptist founders; the same light that lured Meredith's great-grandmothers, grandmothers, mothers, and aunts away from the safety and familiarity of home and into the wider world of knowledge, work, leadership, service.

Meredith College has always been a place where meaning can begin. Long after students have left the campus and moved out into a still larger world, they have retained a vivid sense of Meredith's part in shaping, defining, and giving light and purpose to their lives. It is no accident that Meredith means, that Meredith shines. This campus is a world, after all—the first world that generations of women could rightly call their own.



Breezeway leading from Stringfield to Belk Dining Hall



Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer. . . .

— *Jane Eyre*
Charlotte Brontë



The fictional Jane Eyre, about to embark on her career as a governess at Mr. Rochester's Thornfield Hall, is restless with yearning for a meaningful life. She expresses a feeling no different from many generations of women who have come to Meredith College, seeking a balm for their fevered aspirations, a direction and purpose for their vague longings. The male founders of Meredith were similarly restless in behalf

of women—similarly driven to big dreams and solid advocacy in the cause of educating women. As early as 1835, a lone voice at the North Carolina Baptist State Convention called for consideration of "the establishment of a female seminary of high order." One of those present at the convention, Thomas Meredith, founder and editor of the *Biblical Recorder*, would serve on the committee to consider such a proposal.



Students in front of Thornfield Hall, 1907



Baptist University for Women 1904-1909

But Meredith College was not to receive its charter until many years later—in 1891—largely because of disputes about the wisdom or, more pointedly, the common sense of bothering to educate women at all. Even as late as 1896, disgruntlement and bewilderment produced sputtering indignation among certain men. One young man—surprisingly, an “educator” himself—was quoted in the *Biblical Recorder* as saying, “What is the use of educatin’ a woman anyhow? If she was educated, she couldn’t be sheriff, nor a register of deeds, nor a clerk of the court, nor go to the legislature, so what is the use of educatin’ her? The fact is . . . it hain’t her hemisphere to be educated anyhow, it is us men’s hemisphere.”

Sadly, the young man was right, at least about the limited opportunities for meaningful work available to females. Women could do very little in those cramped

times. Restlessness, longing, frustration, and envy surely plagued the secret hearts of many bright young girls who were every bit as stymied and daunted by custom and tradition as the fictional Jane Eyre, surveying the wide fields beyond Thornfield Hall and chafing under the considerable restraints she suffered. Being orphaned and seemingly penniless, she could either marry well or make her way as a governess.

Yet in life—as in fiction—heroes do exist. Just as Mr. Rochester recognizes Jane’s worth, wit, fire, and intelligence beneath her plain exterior, so did Oliver Larkin Stringfield become the champion of neglected, undervalued women in North Carolina. He, a poor preacher who felt divinely called to serve as a tireless advocate in the then-unpopular cause of educating women, spent years raising money for the Baptist Female University, which later became Meredith College.

Stringfield took on the job of fund-raising when the hope of having such an institution in Raleigh had all but died. A graduate of Wake Forest College, Stringfield had not forgotten his younger sister's haunting lament when he himself had set out for college: "I'd give anything if I only had a chance to be educated," she had cried, clinging to his neck and sobbing. Stringfield wrote in his memoirs: "The more I prayed the greater my anxiety became that we offer our girls the same advantages we were glad to give our boys at Wake Forest."

Stringfield's battle was difficult, as was Jane Eyre's perilous entry into the wider world beyond Lowood Institution, the charity school to which Jane had been sent by her decidedly uncharitable aunt. Stringfield worked against the deeply ingrained notions and prejudices that have always hampered any action of God's grace in a world too often given to law and rigidity, not love and freedom. Stringfield first had to convince the parents that their daughters were every bit as worthy as their sons to be given an opportunity for higher education. More significantly, he had to convince the daughters themselves that they were capable and deserving of such an opportunity.



Elva Wall Davis Gate

Even today, women who are uncertain and doubtful of their gifts, privileges, talents, and visions must be reminded of what is possible beyond the predictable or conventional boundaries blocking the restless imagination, the inquisitive mind. Sometimes women don't know how to look far, look hard, look long, look up. But they can learn. Jane Eyre climbs to the uppermost level of stately Thornfield Hall and looks out "afar over sequestered field and hill, and long dim skyline." She sees a shadowy destiny taking shape in her young imagination. Similarly, generations of Meredith women have looked out beyond the tallest pine, the highest spire, the farthest horizon to find the place of peace, light, freedom, purpose.





*When I speak of knowledge, I mean something intellectual,
something which grasps what it perceives through the senses;
something which takes a view of things; which sees more than the
senses convey; which reasons upon what it sees, and while it sees;
which invests it with an idea.*

— John Henry Cardinal Newman
The Idea of a University



From the time of Meredith College's founding, the educational purpose has been clear as a shaft of sunlight through a sparkling window. The intention of Meredith's founders, professors, and administrators has been to produce in Meredith students a desire for



a knowledge higher, deeper, wider, and more profound than the pragmatic or predictable arts of cooking, crocheting, and coquetry. Meredith stands squarely in the grand liberal-arts tradition. In Cardinal Newman's mighty treatise, he sets forth views widely held in his own age and pertinent to our own. Certainly, Newman addresses his remarks to the education of a "gentleman." But though limited, in terms both of the gender and of the social status of those he would deem worthy of being educated, Newman displays an acute understanding of the distinction between knowledge directed toward specific ends and knowledge acquired for its own sake. Here, his reasoning is sound, his message timeless. Repeatedly, Newman acknowledges the urgent need for practical instruction directed toward achieving specific results. But this, he says, is not knowledge. Newman insists on the hierarchical nature of learning, and he never sees as frivolous or unworthy the cultivation of the intellect for the sole purpose of enlightenment—irrespective of tangible or temporal goals.

On the way to gaining knowledge, Meredith students have learned how to prepare a souffle, develop a roll of film, stage a theatrical production, type a business letter, conjugate a verb, operate a computer, or manage a company. But Meredith's history and rigorous academic curriculum have confirmed its devotion to knowledge acquired for its own sake—as important for women as for men.

Newman's "idea" is a bright one. His brand of knowledge would encourage serious scholarship, not technical training; vigorous debate, not passive acquiescence; profound insight, not basic or superficial





comprehension; careful reasoning, not haphazard whimsy or cant; enduring wisdom, not minimum competency or mere survival. To this end—surely a worthy end in itself—Meredith women have embraced a solid academic program of philosophy, literature, history, language, religion, science, and mathematics, without sacrificing the specialized training and expertise essential for survival in the “real” world—a world more shadowy, insubstantial, and changeable than the ultimate reality behind the face of things. Meredith women have majored in business, medical technology, computer science, physical education, home economics, interior design, sociology, or the fine arts. They have been taught to compete, to succeed, and to adapt to fashionable trends in commerce, culture, health, education, politics. They have been and are, in the vernacular of the business world, “marketable.” But they are also people, not products.

Faith in the liberal-arts tradition demands nothing less than total commitment to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual growth of a complete human being. Women are more than what they do, whom they feed, how they feel or look. As surely as a prism alters light, the changing culture will give surprising shapes and colors to the student’s inner reality. But the light of the soul shines on steadily, and in moments of quiet contemplation—apart from the trends, fashions, and pressures of her era—the student recovers her essential, shining self in the eternal truths common to every age. To aim for less than knowledge would be to settle for a temporal, limited existence—something that stops when clocks stop, something that breathes only when breath is administered to it, something whose inner light is hopelessly fragmented by external pressures. To look inward, to press on toward something higher than the present need, to imagine

eternity when all around us suggests only “here” and simply “now”—these are the great boons of a liberal-arts education in this or any century. There are limits to what a human being can do. But there are no limits to what a human being can know, believe. The body yields to the finite. The soul, heart, and mind aspire to the infinite.

More startling and beautiful than any fact, machine, chart, manual, or star is the mind laid open like a poem or a leaf to receive the secrets of the universe; to absorb the brooding, organic wisdom of the ages. And if the mind is closed to all but what it thinks it needs or simply learns by rote, the heart sinks, the soul languishes, and the intellect fades into “the light of common day.”



Mary Lynch Johnson, professor of English, 1918-1962, and college historian



And it being found inconvenient to assemble in the open air, subject to its inclemencies, the building of a house to meet in was no sooner proposed, and persons appointed to receive contributions, but sufficient sums were soon received to procure the ground and erect the building . . . and the work was carried on with such spirit as to be finished in a much shorter time than could have been expected.

—Benjamin Franklin
Autobiography



Overcrowding, traffic noise on city streets, and lack of privacy forced the Board of Trustees to make plans for moving the campus from its location in downtown Raleigh to some more ample space. This decision, certainly a momentous one, was made on May 23, 1921. By Christmas of 1925, a remarkably short span of time for such a major change, students returned from the holiday to find themselves housed in gleaming new accommodations on a site three miles west of Raleigh on Hillsborough Street. What had been merely a cotton field on the Tucker farm was now a stately, if somewhat muddy and raw looking, aggregation of six buildings of Georgian design. Alternating rain and freezing temperatures created some difficulties. The editor of the *Twig* commented that the mud collected on the girls's shoes could easily serve as substitutes for half soles. But the move, overseen with great efficiency by Meredith president Dr. Charles Edward Brewer, went off smoothly, without the loss of a single library book, desk, microscope, or piece of luggage.

Of course, many students and faculty undoubtedly felt a nostalgic twinge for the Gothic, ivied elegance of Main Building on the old campus. Margaret Ferguson Sackett, class of 1904, wrote, "I shall never forget my impression of the intricacies of Old Main's architecture, with its many turrets and gables, nor that of East Building, with its walnut woodwork, spacious halls, and high ceilings." A sigh must occasionally have escaped the lips of faculty and administrators who saw the new campus buildings crisscrossed with makeshift boardwalks, the grounds awash in red clay, and the red brick walls starkly outlined against the ominous winter sky. Age and familiarity soften surroundings. The new Meredith campus would soon acquire the pleasing ambiance of shady streets, the soft patina of family heirlooms.

For now, visitors to the new campus saw first an imposing administrative building, with stone steps leading to a colonnaded porch. Under the large dome were located the library on the second floor and the administrative offices and parlors on the first floor. In





1931, this new “main” building was named in memory of Livingston Johnson, a Meredith trustee for thirty years and editor of the *Biblical Recorder* for thirteen



years. In 1956, the stone steps were eliminated—often a source of confusion for campus visitors who climbed the steps and found themselves in the library rather than in the administrative offices. Initially, a terrace replaced the

steps, and two years later a large, bright lobby was created by raising the floor under the rotunda. Red carpeted stairs rising from the center of the lobby and railed balconies above now provide an impressive entrance for visitors. In 1969-1970, the rotunda was reconstructed, redecorated, and named in honor of Raymond A. Bryan. Around the base of the skylighted dome are carved four biblical quotations, fitting re-

mindings of Meredith’s lofty academic aims as well as its Christian heritage:

Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:32

Study to show thyself approved unto God.

II Timothy 2:15

Jesus saith I am the way, the truth, and the life.

John 14:6.

Other foundation can no man lay than that laid which is Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 3:11

The Bryan Rotunda provides a dramatic architectural setting especially appropriate for the frequent exhibitions of paintings, photographs, and sculpture by Meredith students and by renowned local and national artists. Just outside the double doors facing the front of Johnson Hall is the Shaw Fountain, dedicated



in 1974 to Henry M. and Blanche Shaw. The fountain is beautifully accented with a circular driveway, benches and walkways, flowers and shrubs.

Whereas the academic buildings represent the ultimate purpose of Meredith College, the offices and officials housed in Johnson Hall, officially designated the Livingston Johnson Administrative Building, make possible all the ongoing life of the campus. The offices of the president, vice-presidents, the dean of the col-

lege, the dean of students, the business manager, and the registrar are housed here—as well as the graduate program, institutional advancement, admissions, business affairs, student development, and college relations. Indeed, each day hundreds of parents, students, alumnae, faculty members, and community leaders pass through the doors of Johnson Hall. They seek information about student grades, pick up paychecks, chat in the blue parlor, meet with various campus administrators on matters of fund-raising, inquire about medical or retirement benefits, embark on a tour of the campus for prospective students, or simply stroll through the lobby to examine the current art exhibit. Occasionally, an employee or student pauses, perhaps to linger over the insights and truths carved around the ceiling of the Bryan Rotunda, perhaps to note the announcement of an upcoming campus event.

Johnson Hall is symbolic of the duality of the academic life. A successful institution of higher learning must be counted on to provide the funds for the necessary materials of learning: a bit of chalk; a clean, well-lighted classroom; a comfortable desk; a care-



Johnson Hall

fully selected textbook; a capable professor; a willing student. A vision of beauty and truth, however vital, must also be viable. Here, within the walls of Johnson Hall, the expectations of students and visions of academicians are given practical shape, design, purpose.

Here, the dream is dusted off and given a daily, sturdy reality. Over time, Johnson Hall has truly become another "old Main," sans ivy and Gothic turrets but with all the reassuring air of humming activity and the soul-satisfying pleasure of enduring aesthetic appeal.



*Four courts I made, East, West and South
and North,
In each a squared lawn, wherefrom
The golden gorge of dragons spouted forth
A flood of fountain foam.*

*And round the cool green courts there ran a
row
Of cloisters, branch'd like mighty woods,
Echoing all night to that sonorous flow
Of spouted fountain-floods.*

— Alfred, Lord Tennyson
The Palace of Art



Certainly symbolic of all fresh starts, all lofty ideals, the basic design of the buildings on the new campus was balanced, symmetrical, orderly. Six buildings then formed a quadrangle, the sides of which consisted of an administrative building on the front, four dormitories along the sides, and a dining room and kitchen on the back of the quadrangle. Even today, this quadrangle remains the focal point of a campus increasingly changing and growing around its perimeter.



Fannie E.S. Heck Memorial Fountain

In 1926, none of the buildings had yet been named. The four dormitories were simply referred to as buildings A, B, C, and D. But by 1931, the year in which the administration building was named in honor of Livingston Johnson, the dormitories had also acquired names—particular identities. Jones Hall was later renamed Brewer, in honor of Charles Edward Brewer, president of Meredith College from 1916 until 1939. Faircloth, Vann, and Stringfield were named, respectively, in honor of attorney William T. Faircloth, former Meredith president Richard Tilman Vann, and staunch Meredith founder and advocate Oliver Larkin

Stringfield. Over time, these raw-looking student residences would become increasingly inviting and distinctive, less alien and forbidding than they must have seemed to students returning to campus in the frozen, rainy winter of 1926. The “inns,” in poet Marianne Moore’s words, would be “residences”—real homes to generations of Meredith students—as familiar and singular as the roses, irises, crape myrtles, dogwoods, spirea, redbuds, and scuppernong vines that gradually softened the angular shapes of the precise geometrical design.

When buildings acquire names, residents, furnishings, they take on personalities. So it happened at the first naming in Eden, and so it happens now. The rather threatening sterility and anonymity of this imposing quadrangle were soon to vanish. When the dormitories were first erected, each housed about 125 students, and each boasted a kitchenette, launderette,





Brewer and Faircloth Residence Halls

pressing room, and social room. The infirmary was located on the fourth floor of what was later to be called Faircloth Hall, on the east side of the quadrangle. The rooms were grouped in suites of two, with one closet for every two students and a bathroom for each suite—to the delight of students who had been used to sharing one bathtub among twenty-nine students. Between 1955 and 1964, the dormitories were periodically refurbished, with fresh paint, new furniture and bathroom fixtures, and improved lighting. Eventually, wall-to-wall carpeting was added to the corridors, along with showers, bathroom tiles and cabinets, fluorescent lights, and new furnishings for the social rooms. And since 1968, students have been permitted to have telephones in their rooms, in addition to extension and pay telephones on each floor of the dormitories.

Though distinctions have blurred in recent years among classes assigned to particular dormitories, the freshmen and sophomores have traditionally lived in Vann and Stringfield, on the west side of the quadrangle, and upperclasswomen have been housed in Faircloth and Brewer, on the east. Carolyn Hill, class of '87, remembers that the movement from the freshmen dorms on the west to the upperclasswomen dorms on

the east was a significant one: "I felt like I had moved up when I got to the other side of the courtyard." And she recalls the different personalities of the dormitories being very much dependent on the inhabitants. "There were wild halls," she says. And certainly there



have been, in contrast, sedate and studious halls. But the distinction between the lower and upper classes has been the strongest distinguishing feature of dormitory life. Even in the dining hall, freshmen instinctively have gathered on the end nearer Vann and Stringfield, while upperclasswomen have dined on



the east side of the dining room. This arrangement has contributed to good-natured rivalry across the court, especially during campus events like Cornhuskin', when the upper and lower classwomen run back and forth, competing for the honor of having spread toilet paper over the largest area of grass—on the side opposite their own, of course. There were waterfights, too, and, in an environmentally conscious era, aluminum can art has become a part of these competitions.

Over the years, certain features of the dormitories have served to attract students for various reasons. Until living quarters were added to the fourth floors of these four dormitories, the top floor of Faircloth served as the infirmary and the rest were simply attics. Catherine E. Moore, '50, recalls that nobody ever went to the attics of these buildings except to sneak puffs on cigarettes. She says, "When you opened the doors to the attics, you were confronted by piles of cigarette butts." But these smoking sanctuaries were denied students when the upper rooms were converted to living quarters. Dr. Mary Lynch Johnson notes that these new quarters were so "attractive" that students

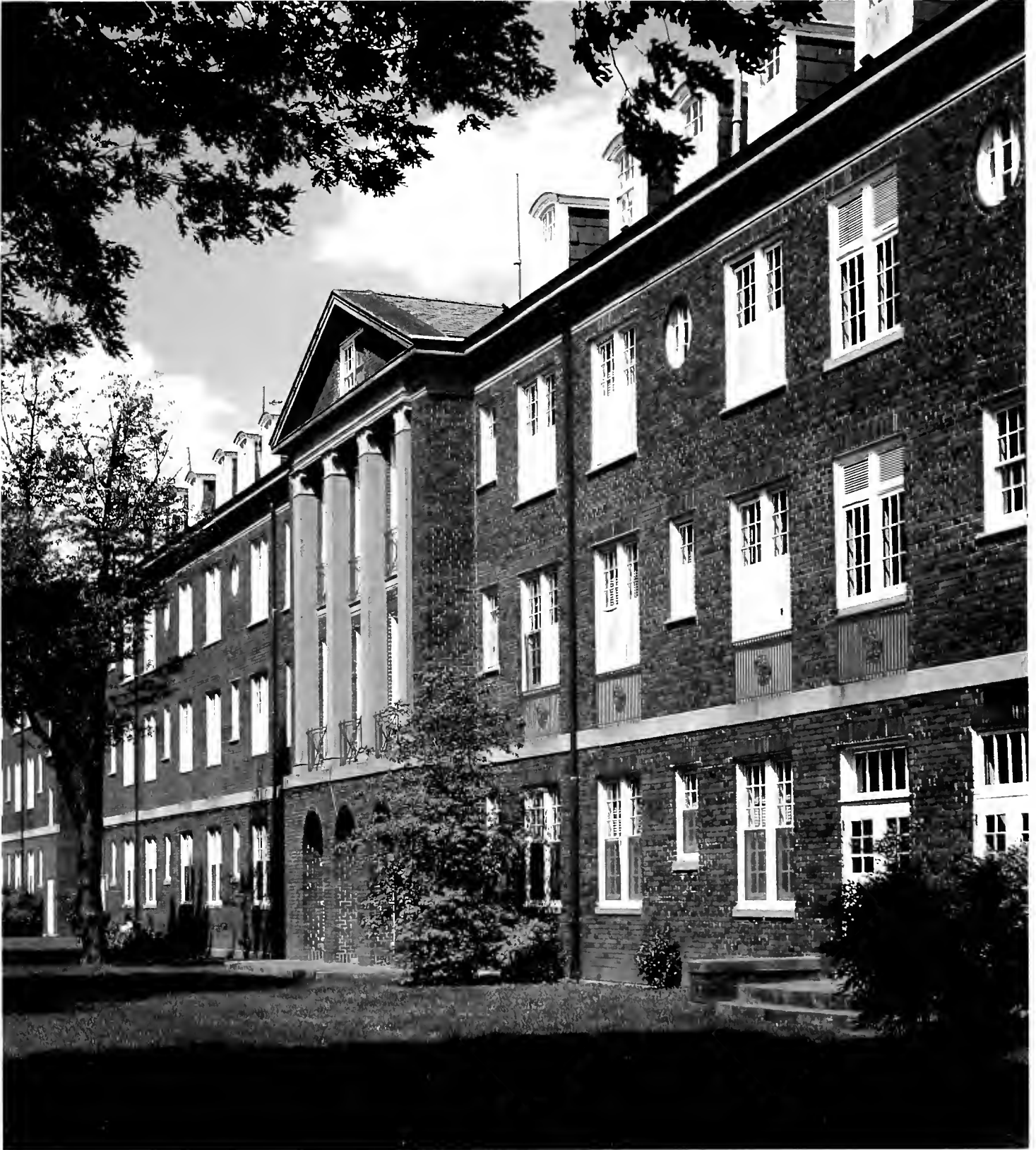
vied for the right to inhabit the "penthouses." The rooms were "more interesting," tucked, as they were, into the roofline. There were sloped ceilings, small dormer windows, an air of quaint distinction. The conventional dormitory rooms were

"boxes." These rooms at the top had character. But such perspectives and tastes are highly subjective. A high school student participating in Meredith's summer program "Looking Toward College" was heard to say, "I just *love* Stringfield. It has so much character." So who can say what draws one student to Stringfield, another to Faircloth, still another to the cosy attic



lodgings in all four buildings? It is a personal matter—and mysteriously evocative—like names, like memories, like traditions, like the scent of roses beyond the window or a whiff of tobacco floating illicitly down the corridor. Similarly, each incoming student—her-

self unique—ultimately learns the singular personalities of these residence halls. And in time, these “cloisters” become colonies, each humming with its own particular energy and rhythm.



Vann Residence Hall



The year is nearly over. Snow has fallen, and everything is white. It is very cold. I have changed the position of my desk into a corner. Perhaps I shall be able to write far more easily here. Yes, this is a good place for a desk, because I can't see out of the stupid window. I am quite private. The lamp stands on one corner and in the corner. Its rays fall on the yellow and green Indian curtain and on the strip of red embroidery. The forlorn wind scarcely breathes. I love to close my eyes for a moment and think of the land outside, white under the mingled snow and moonlight—white trees, white fields—the heaps of stones by the roadside white—snow in the furrows. Mon Dieu! How quiet and how patient!

I am sitting at the window of a little square room furnished with a bed, a wax apple, and an immense flowery clock. Outside the window there is a garden full of wall flowers and blue enamel saucepans. The clocks are striking five and the last rays of sun pour under the swinging blind. It is very hot—the kind of heat that makes one's cheeks burn in infancy. But I am so happy I must send you a word on a spare page of my diary, dear.

— Katherine Mansfield
Journal



In every season, a woman can know—in her new-found freedom from home and family—the bliss of coming at last to a room of her own—of shoving a desk where she pleases; of feeling the radical significance of an open window beckoning and distracting her from the waiting page; of catching a flash of blue enamel, a flower, a red apple in the mind's eye; of sighing and smiling to the rhythm of clocks and weather; of privacy, silence, patient snow, perfect intimacy.

When Katherine Mansfield wrote these words, she was a young woman in her mid-twenties—not much older than the Meredith students who have for one-hundred years settled into the small, square rooms of their first private living quarters, there to discover—after the occasional pangs of homesickness have subsided—a breadth of freedom and independence they never believed possible. They are rulers of miniature domains, empresses of Lilliput, arranging their books on the shelves, setting out their toiletries and family



photos on the dresser. Daily irritations of raucous plumbing, dormitory pranks, uncapped toothpaste tubes, overcrowded closets, or recalcitrant roommates are trivial beside the one great pride and pleasure of ownership—the sound of the key turning in the lock, the telephone call that *must* be for them. They are happy to fall on the bed at the end of a long day, among the plumped pillows and thick quilts that signal a burgeoning domestic maturity and safety. Asked what they remember most about college life, Meredith students would surely cite the small rooms and resonant atmosphere of the buildings in which they lived, wrote, studied, sang, sobbed, argued, joked, and, very likely, prayed.

Prior to 1962, the four dormitories comprising the east and west sides of the courtyard were adequate to house the students then at Meredith. But in the last thirty years, the number of residence halls has grown to accommodate the larger student population. Poteat and Carroll were completed in 1962, and Barefoot and Heilman were completed in the early seventies—the latter dormitories having been part of a five-million dollar development campaign announced in 1966 and intended for two new dormitories, a library, student center, and gymnasium. Carroll Annex, a smaller facility housing only twenty-two students and two upper-class hall officers, was the last of the five new residence halls to be completed. Each of these new dormitories was named—as have been other buildings on campus—in honor of major financial supporters, trustees, presidents, or admired faculty members. Poteat bears the name of Ida Poteat, an art professor at Meredith for forty years. The Delia Dixon Carroll Health Center and Residence Hall was named for the first of Meredith's college physicians, who came to the Baptist Female University in 1899. The odd juxtaposition of living quarters and health facilities in a single building caused some consternation among the medical staff. According to Dr. Marie Mason, "all the doctors and nurses threatened to resign when the students moved in," proving, one must suppose, the universal human need for "space," both in life and in work. Dr. E. Bruce Heilman, Meredith's fifth president, had the honor of having a dormitory named after him as well, a building so luxurious that students dubbed it the "Heilman Hilton." Barefoot Residence Hall bears the name of C. C. Barefoot and his wife Kilty and family. C. C. Barefoot and his wife have both served on the Board of Trustees.







Delia Dixon Carroll Health Center and Residence Hall

With the exceptions of Carroll Hall and Carroll Annex, each of the other residence halls houses 140-170 students, with arrangements and facilities almost rivaling any modern hotel. Private baths are available for each two students, the rooms are wired for cable television, and the residence halls provide additional space for socializing, doing laundry, preparing meals in the kitchenettes, and ironing—should any Meredith student care to disturb the natural fibers of her 100 % cotton shorts or blouses with a bit of steam heat and sturdy pressure.

But no matter how rowdy the “public” rooms in these bustling dormitories may become, each student has the inalienable right to climb the stairs, turn the key in the lock, throw her books in the nearest corner, fix a Diet Coke, and gaze out the window—idly enjoying, as did Katherine Mansfield, a secret, happy world springing forth on the pages of her diary.



Barefoot Hall



*Elysium is as far as to
The very nearest room,
If in that room a friend await
Felicity or doom.*

*What fortitude the soul contains,
That it can so endure
The accent of a coming foot,
The opening of a door.*

—Emily Dickinson
Elysium Is As Far



Ever since the Alumnae House was first used on November 13, 1953, its doors have been opening to receive a stream of visitors: speakers at campus functions, students, faculty, and, of course, the alumnae—for whom this building truly is a second home. Later renamed the Mae Grimmer House, in honor of the Alumnae Association's first secretary, the colonial brick building exudes an air of comfortable welcome. Originally only a small building with a single large meeting room and a tiny office and kitchen, the Mae Grimmer House later saw the addition of two wings—including two large offices, a conference room, and four bedrooms used for overnight guests. The kitchen



Mae Grimmer Alumnae House —Interior



Mae Grimmer Alumnae House



Miss Mae Grimmer (left) and alumnae admiring her portrait

was also expanded, making possible the serving of refreshments or even substantial meals for various campus meetings and social events.

Generous alumnae and friends of Meredith have provided most of the amenities available in private homes, including such valuable items as a silver punch bowl and tray, a walnut banquet table, comfortable sofas, a Ming vase, two Wing chairs in the style of Queen Anne, candlesticks, a sideboard, and a Victorian love seat. The main parlor of this House immediately evokes the memory of home, a sense of ease and conviviality common among the alumnae themselves.

Whether the assemblage is a weekday meeting of the Colton English Club—with students sitting cross-legged on the floor—or an elegant tea—with guests perched primly on the edges of their chairs, the Mae Grimmer House seems to invite visitors to stay, rest, be restored and enlightened by whatever occasion brings

them through its doors. There is a pleasant sense of anticipation when the front door opens: a whiff of coffee is in the air; the shady trees rustle just beyond the window; and the foot taps lightly across the wooden floor to the richly carpeted interior. Always immaculate, always orderly, and beautifully decorated, the Mae Grimmer House suggests the very mood of Dickinson's poem. Something seems about to happen within those walls, and something usually does. If Elysium is the footfall of a friend, the opening of a door, then the Mae Grimmer House is surely heaven.



*So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,
Despite of wrinkles, this thou golden time.*

—William Shakespeare
Sonnet 3



Through the long perspective of advancing years and growing maturity, graduates increasingly come to value and savor their “golden time” at Meredith. The years bring light and space. The windows of the mind and heart are thrown open to admit a larger view of what the four years at Meredith have meant and will continue to mean to a host of alumnae. Enthusiasm and loyalty are difficult to measure except by actions, and certainly the alumnae of Meredith College have proved their ongoing dedication to this academic institution by gifts of time and money; frequent returns to the campus for class reunions and special educational opportunities; responsible leadership on boards and committees; and conscientious field work in local chapters, both in recruiting potential students and in keeping green the memory of what Meredith was and yet can be.

Meredith’s founders and students were quick to see the importance of strengthening and steadying the ties between campus life and the world beyond. The Alumnae Association of the Baptist Female University was organized by the school’s first graduating class in 1902. Since that time, the alumnae have continued to change and grow, meeting the demands of an ever-larger and more sophisticated network of graduates



Dorothy Loftin Goodwin, '47, and daughter, Susan Goodwin Thornbrough, '76

scattered throughout the world. The first ten “clubs” were organized in 1912-13, and eventually became chapters of the Alumnae Association. The Association had no salaried staff until 1928, when the alumnae urged the trustees to hire a full-time secretary. The legendary Mae Grimmer, '14, took the position and served in it for thirty-six years, relieving the Alumnae Association officers of the burden of careful, daily attention to a wealth of responsibilities and activities. Miss Grimmer’s remarkable energy and wit—along with her almost uncanny ability to recall the names, faces, hometowns, occupations, and offspring of countless Meredith graduates—earned for her the admiration and affection of the graduates, a respect and appreciation demonstrated in the naming of the alumnae house in her honor. Among Miss Grimmer’s many contributions to the vitality of the Association was the formation of the Granddaughters’ Club, a favorite feature of the program presented each year on Alumnae Day. In 1968, the position of executive secretary of the Alumnae Association was renamed, though the name was not used until 1970, when Carolyn Covington Robinson, '50, became the first Director of Alumnae Affairs.





The late Ethel Carroll Squires, '07

Alumnae were first invited to speak at Alumnae Day in 1923, and the practice has continued to the present. These Meredith graduates have spoken on a variety of topics and themes, sometimes about developments in their sundry professions, sometimes about



Norma V. Rose, '36

the importance of Meredith to graduates, and on still other occasions about the responsibilities of Meredith women in modern society. The variety and scope of these speakers' presentations prove the value of a wide-ranging liberal arts education. They have talked of everything from medicine

to television, from preaching to Japanese costumes, from facing the future to learning from the past. One alumna—Margaret Bright, who attended every Meredith commencement for sixty-six years—worked tirelessly in the care and promotion of Meredith's valuable doll collection, now housed in the Margaret Bright Gallery on the third level of Bryan Rotunda in Johnson Hall. Each graduating class at Meredith has presented a doll to the alumnae on Alumnae Day—representing the fashion, attitudes, and values of that class.

But though the alumnae were active in many facets of campus and community life from as early as 1902, they did not enjoy representation on the Board of Trustees until 1918; and not until 1960 did a woman—Dr. Elizabeth James Dotterer, '30—serve as president of the Board of Trustees. In 1961, when Sarah Elizabeth Vernon Watts, '34, took over the presidency of the trustees because of Leroy Martin's illness, she became the first woman to sign the diplomas given to Meredith graduates. In 1991, Meredith's centennial year, Margaret Weatherspoon Parker, '38, became the first elected alumna to serve as chair of the Board of Trustees.

In 1946, the *Alumnae Magazine* was first published, thereby securing for graduates and Meredith supporters alike a quarterly report of college events, class notes, faculty lectures—indeed, any news or academic accomplishments of interest to all those with Meredith

ties. Norma Rose, '36, former head of the English department, served as able editor of this publication until 1972, when Carolyn Robinson took over editing duties of the magazine two years into her appointment as Director of Alumnae Affairs. Her role was considerably expanded when she later became Director of the Office of Publications—a division responsible for the writing, editing, and production of all regularly scheduled college publications.

As a result of careful record-keeping and modern technology, Meredith alumnae can keep in touch and stay informed as they never have before. And in Meredith's centennial year, such a network becomes increasingly useful and gratifying. At an on-campus leadership conference for officers of the Alumnae Association in the centennial year, the assembled women responded enthusiastically and thoughtfully to the question: "What do you want from Meredith College?"



Patsy Johnson Gilliland, '71 and son

One graduate wanted to be able to "return to a place to hear the ancient voices." Another hoped to be "revived and affirmed through ongoing relationships with women of like mind and values." These Meredith alumnae wanted "to make a difference in the present and future of Meredith College." And finally, according to Mimi Holt, Association president in Meredith's centennial year, the women were eager to "reaffirm the values related to a liberal arts, Christian education." "This desire," Holt said, "transcends everything we have had to say."

The days are most assuredly over when daughters attended the Baptist Female University, graduated, and returned to assume their traditional roles in families and communities. Modern women have a surprising—and at times vaguely threatening—array of choices and prospects. The future, for many women, is less certain than it was in the sometimes stifling, but often rather secure, past. Women have demanded more from the culture, and more is expected from

them. Thus, institutions of higher learning must address these multiple roles and opportunities.

Any Meredith graduate will surely agree that a diploma does not signal the end of learning, any more than a job guarantees advancement or a stable family life guarantees a happy, pampered old age. A college is expected to remain a source of inspiration, education, and opportunity long after official academic connections are severed. Consequently, Meredith has adapted its program and vision to accommodate the needs and desires of the graduates. In the centennial year, the first Alumnae College invited graduates to return the campus, not merely to catch up on old times with classmates or to receive awards but, rather, to re-enter the classroom, to hear faculty lectures, and to continue the only education worth having—the one that never stops, the one that sustains and enriches women through all the frequently stimulating and sometimes alarming vicissitudes of life. The “golden time,” from the broad perspective of many Meredith alumnae, is *now*, and the “window” is open wide.



Mary Martin Johnson Browne, '21 (left) and Alice Bryan Johnson, '35



The sun shone down for nearly a week on the secret garden. The Secret Garden was what Mary called it when she was thinking of it. She liked the name, and she liked still more the feeling that when its beautiful old walls shut her in no one knew where she was. It seemed almost like being shut out of the world in some fairy place.

— Frances Hodgson Burnett
The Secret Garden



A shovelful of earth dug from the middle of a cotton field does not seem an auspicious beginning for a garden. But so it has happened at Meredith College. And so does the miracle of all gardens come to pass: the barren or weedy earth, the first seed, the bright sun, the benevolent rain, the changing seasons, the gardener's constant care—all these conspire to bring beauty out of the formless materials of creation. And behind this miracle is a feeling, a mood, a commitment. As the fox reminds the Little Prince in Antoine

de Saint-Exupery's whimsical tale, "It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important." The campus is a rose—and countless alumnae, faculty, staff, and students have tenderly cared for and celebrated the fragile yet enduring natural beauty that abounds here.

Indeed, at Meredith there is a garden for every taste and purpose, all of them as shimmering and secret as the garden to which young Mary Lennox finds the key in Burnett's childhood classic. At first, Meredith's gardens were haphazard efforts to overcome the oppressive view of muddy grounds and raw red bricks around the original quadrangle. Faculty members—among them Miss Allen, Miss Rhodes, and Miss Welch—planted shrubbery at the gate; roses, irises, and chrysanthemums over the campus; bulbs near the chimney; and dogwood, cherry, spirea, redbud, and a scuppernong vine at the corner of Stringfield Hall and the dining hall. The alumnae gave the cherry trees lining the driveway and the two magnolia trees in the oval in front of Johnson Hall. In 1969, pine trees and climbing roses were planted to soften the effect of the chain-link fence surrounding the campus. And in the 1970's, when the cherry trees were dying, Donald Sampson, a professor in the English department, initiated a Valentine's Day project to replace the cherry trees with dogwoods. These amateur gardeners seemed to understand that a rough patch of untended ground needs every bit as much care and attention as the tangled souls and weedy intellects of untutored humans. If Meredith would grow, in every sense of that supercharged word, its surroundings would need the same light, water, and nourishment a good book can offer the thirsty, hungry spirit of a young college student. The eye must be fed, after all, and it is ever a window to the soul.







(From left to right) Jean Humphreys, '59; Lillian Parker Wallace; John A. Yarbrough; and Becky Surles, '59, in front of Hunter Hall, February 1959

Over the years, gardens of every shape and size have added beauty and focus to the larger green of Meredith's spacious campus. In 1964, perhaps the loveliest garden spot on the Meredith Campus—the Elva Bryan McIver Amphitheater—was used for the first time on Class Day. A caption in the *Biblical Recorder* dubbed this spot “one of the most beautiful places in Raleigh—or anywhere else.” This impressive oasis adjacent to the main driveway leading into the campus was first conceived nearly forty years before its completion. Miss Ida Poteat then remarked that the natural slope down through the oak grove southeast of the quadrangle would make a fine spot for an amphitheater. But a small spring running through that area seemed inadequate to yield the abundant water supply necessary to fill a lake. Not until 1963 did a landscape architect confirm that an “attractive and self-feeding lake” was possible. Digging began, but the giant hole in the ground bore no resemblance to Miss Poteat's fanciful ideal. For several months, the lack of rain seemed to guarantee that the gaping, muddy hole would remain an eyesore rather than the

magnificent body of water that dreamers envisioned. One alumna called the hole a “Big Mud Puddle” and suggested rain dances to appease the dark gods who withheld showers. But the rains did come, and by the spring of 1964 the mud puddle was a tranquil lake sparkling under a canopy of oak trees with a lush, grassy island at its center.

The word for such a garden is breathtaking. A bridge connects the island to the sloped banks of the lake, and ducks gladly consume the crumbs scattered on the water's surface. The azaleas put on a spectacular display each spring, making this spot a festive arena for great occasions. The amphitheater, which seats 1200 people, has been the setting for graduation exercises, dramatic productions, Easter sunrise services, and concerts. Elva Bryan McIver, for whom the amphitheater was named, included a bequest in her will to Meredith College for \$45,000, making possible the construction of this haven for countless weary students and local residents who gather to refresh themselves on the shores of the lake, under the shady oak trees. The gazebo is a romantic spot on moonlight nights, and there are benches scattered here and there under the trees for private talk, silence, peace—even as Hillsborough Street hums, roars, and fumes just over the grassy field. Here, the dormitory chatter, faculty drudgery, and administrative bustle subside for a while, and the only thought or feeling is the soothing reassurance of “lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore” (W. B. Yeats). After a time, visitors rise refreshed to return to the offices and pavements of daily life, but, just as the poet carries the vision of Innisfree in his mind's eye, they carry the memory of this scene and setting in “the deep heart's core.”



The Meredith iris, developed by Loleta Kenan Powell, '41



Elva Bryan McIver Amphitheater

Other secret gardens dot the campus, bringing beauty—as did the medievalists to the apses, naves, buttresses and hidden niches in their great cathedrals—to what is less immediately visible and showy. The medievalists showed their reverence for all of creation by decorating the unseen as well as the seen. The McIver Amphitheater is very grand, very public. But tucked away in the corners of the campus are tiny gardens, ideal retreats for those who like their beauty on a smaller, more intimate scale. Certainly, the Margaret Craig Martin Garden, on the east end of the Mae Grimmer Alumnae House, is such a garden—with walls constructed of bricks brought from the old campus, immense shade trees, potted ferns, benches, camellias, liriope, hollies, acuba, and, in spring, a gorgeous display of azaleas. This tiny walled garden is sometimes the site of impromptu classes or quiet study sessions. Henrietta Braun, '84, secretary to the Director of Alumnae Affairs, adds, grinning, "Sometimes we might see an occasional couple necking in the garden," though the proximity of this garden to the windows of the Alumnae House inspires prudence, even among moonstruck students. This garden was, in 1970, given by the Alumnae Association in honor of Margaret Craig Martin, '30, whose responsibilities at Meredith were as varied as the flowers in her garden—most of which she herself planted. She served as an instructor in Latin and English at Meredith, Director of Alumnae Affairs from 1964-1970, a member of the Board of Trustees, and a past president of the Alumnae Association.

Still other gardens were added in the eighties and nineties, including the Faw Garden, named in honor of the family of J.C. Faw, of Wilkesboro, North Carolina. This garden, situated behind the Harriet Mardre Wainwright Music Building, is the only Meredith garden which boasts a sundial and a specially commissioned art work. The outdoor sculpture entitled "A Joyful Noise" is a cheerful, playful creation mimicking walled vines and garden flowers. The design is the work of internationally renowned sculptor Dorothy Gillespie, who was on campus for two weeks in the early eighties as a professor visiting under a Kenan grant. Nona Short, a member of the art department, recalls using the Faw Garden very often for receptions when the art department was still located on that side of the campus. And she adds that members of the art department then worked diligently to keep the Faw Garden weeded and tended, in addition to planting irises and chrysanthemums there.

In 1989 and 1990, two gardens were added to the campus, both adjacent to the new Gaddy-Hamrick Art Center, dedicated in 1987. The Cleo Perry Garden,



Shaw Fountain

honoring this former Director of Alumnae Affairs and past president of the Alumnae Association, is located at the entrance to the Frankie G. Weems Gallery. Frankie G. Weems, wife of John Edgar Weems, the sixth president of Meredith College, was also honored by having the small garden alongside the Gaddy-Hamrick Art Center named for her. In addition, the Shaw Fountain in front of the Livingston Johnson Administration Building and the Fannie E. S. Heck Memorial Fountain in the center of the quadrangle provide attractive accents to the grassy expanses and Georgian architecture of the campus. On a hot day, visitors pass these fountains, listen to the sound of the water, watch the sprays shooting up against the blue horizon, and feel the soothing reassurance cool water brings to humans in search of rest and peace.

Life continues to grow and flourish at Meredith College, both in and out of doors. But often it is possible to get lost in the maze of campus activities, the endless corridors and committee rooms of progress, competition, and achievement. Sometimes the only way to find our way back to ourselves is in a garden, where nature whispers secrets too deep for words, too fundamental for logic or intelligence. Philosopher Blaise Pascal writes in *Pensees*, "The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of." In the secret garden of the heart, the primordial soul is ever green, ever growing, if the mind and body can only be silenced long enough to hear nature's eternal message. It is whispering in the wind, rippling on the water, waving in the tall grasses, shouting in the emphatic red of the rose.





To admit authorities, however heavily furred or gowned, into our libraries and let them tell us how to read, what to read, what value to place on what we read, is to destroy the spirit of freedom which is the breath of these sanctuaries. Everywhere else we may be bound by laws and conventions—there we have none.

— Virginia Woolf
How Should One Read a Book?



For centuries the masses have looked upon scholars and book-lovers with mingled fear, admiration, and envy. Parents have sent mixed signals to their sons and daughters, alternately urging them to pursue their studies and, in the next breath, advising them to get their noses out of the books and go play. Virginia Woolf, a woman of considerable intellectual gifts, comprehends the risk of true scholarship and revels in the boundless possibilities of a well-stocked library, a comfortable chair, and the soothing sound of pages gently turning in the palpable air of great literature

and great ideas. It is bliss—this freedom, this breath of wisdom and wit blowing through the open, eager mind.

Meredith students have often tucked themselves into the corners of the library to conduct research, write papers, study, dream—to be, for a few brief hours, entirely free of the constraints of the society into which they happen to have been born. The world of books, after all, is timely and relevant, to be sure—but it exists as well outside space and time. Penelope, Arete, Athena—powerful women in Homer's *The Odyssey*—can become as real to students as particular feminine role models of their own generation. In the library students have been free to unlock the barred gates of their minds—to eschew cant, prejudice, hysteria, suspicion, fear, or even the intellectual sluggishness that leads to platitudinous thinking or belief. Here students have discovered for themselves the truth or falsehood of what they have simply been told by sundry authorities. Of course, not all students have sought out the library for such lofty reasons. Sometimes idle curiosity, boredom, or despair has caused them to leaf through the pages of a novel, poem, biography, or psychology textbook. And necessity—a paper due, a big test—has sometimes propelled them across campus and into the library stacks. But the reading that may have begun with less than noble motives has sometimes ended with the slow but certain formation of solid ideas, sound judgment, fresh perspectives, improved taste, genuine pleasure.

But libraries have not always been the clean, well-lighted havens students at Meredith have come to take for granted. Meredith women—thanks to the concerted efforts of generous alumnae and Friends of the Library—know little of the once rare privilege and pleasure of having ready access to the wisdom and





Old library in Johnson Hall



Carlyle Campbell Library

ignorance of the ages, the soul-satisfying artistry of a poem, the unassailable fortress of hard facts. Merely to own a book in Geoffrey Chaucer's medieval world was unusual. To possess a personal library of sixty volumes—as did Chaucer himself—was extraordinary. Even in American history, legends abound of our nation's leaders scrimping and saving to buy a book. Abraham Lincoln had less than a year's formal education, but his early reading of such works as *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* shaped his untutored mind and prepared him for the arduous task of leading a divided nation. Later, he read Shakespeare, Burns, the Bible. The lifelong habit of reading changed his character and mind, causing him to be remembered as one of the most eloquent leaders in our nation's history.

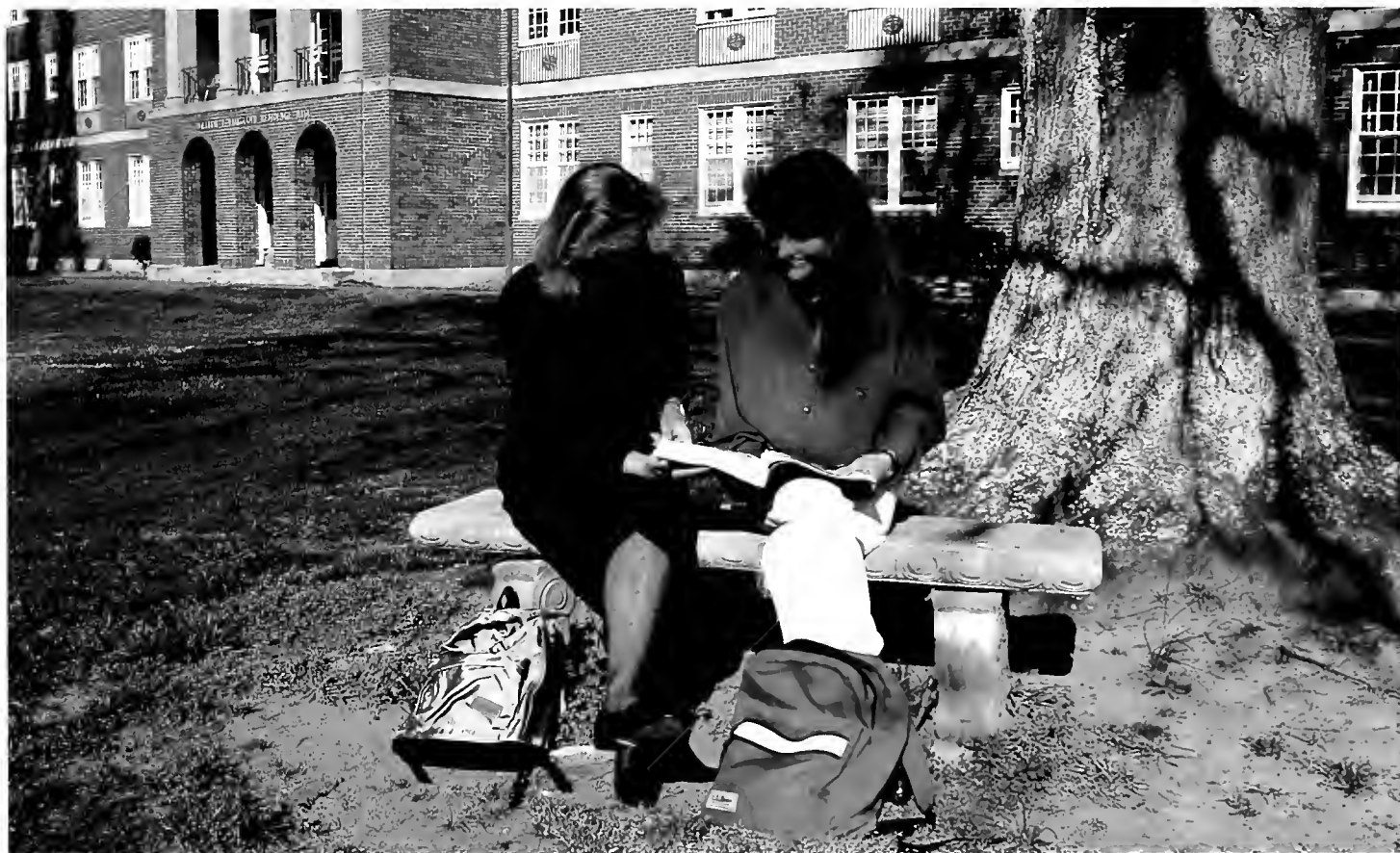
As Virginia Woolf points out, a library is and must be a place of perfect liberty and autonomy—where no restless, questing human can be denied entry. In 1900, when Meredith College was still known as the Baptist Female University, the library contained only 650 volumes and was located in a classroom on the second floor of Main Building. The nearby State Library and the Olivia Raney Library provided students with ad-

ditional resources in those precarious early years. But the trustees understood the urgent need for a good campus library. In 1902, the trustees instructed the curator of the library, then a professor of natural science, "to seek in all legitimate ways to increase the usefulness of the library." Bequests were made. Donations came from students, faculty, and interested citizens. By 1910, the library boasted 2,500 volumes. And in 1911, Miss Emma Moore Jones became the first full-time librarian.

When Meredith College moved to its present location, the entire second floor of Johnson Hall was given over to the library. Although President Carlyle Campbell and others recognized the pressing need for a separate library building, many years would pass before the library was completed. Fund-raising began in 1944. On February 27, 1969, the Carlyle Campbell Library was dedicated. From those early years of makeshift facilities and limited staff, the Carlyle Campbell Library has grown into a multi-faceted resource center, housing everything from well-worn classics to audio-visual equipment, microfilm files, photo-copy equipment. It is a repository for nearly 150,000 volumes, as well as countless periodicals, pub-

lic documents, pamphlets, and newspapers. The building also contains archives, offices, carrels, and study rooms.

The Friends of the Carlyle Campbell Library works to support the growth and improvement of Meredith's library. Meredith's alumnae, trustees, and faculty understand that the library is the touchstone, the well-spring for all other academic, cultural, and professional endeavors on campus. Meredith's library is light years from the scant library of the medieval scholar, a far cry from the tiny classroom which housed the first library of the Baptist Female University. Whatever the hue and cry of doomsdayers and naysayers regarding the dangers of books, free inquiry, and profound scholarship, Meredith College has continued to provide students with the light, space, and freedom they need to read, study, debate, and, ultimately, to make up their own minds. Even the library's designers and architects must have grasped the symbolic and actual significance of the library in vouchsafing to its patrons and scholars a respite from darkness and ignorance. The library is situated at the center of Meredith's academic buildings, giving light to all.



Until I was thirteen and left Arkansas for good, the Store was my favorite place to be. Alone and empty in the mornings, it looked like an unopened present from a stranger. Opening the front doors was pulling the ribbon off the unexpected gift. The light would come in softly (we faced north), easing itself over the shelves of mackerel, salmon, tobacco, thread. It fell flat on the big vat of lard and by noontime during the summer the grease had softened to a thick soup. Whenever I walked into the Store in the afternoon, I sensed that it was tired. I alone could hear the slow pulse of its job half done. But just before bedtime, after numerous people had walked in and out, had argued over their bills, or joked about their neighbors, or just dropped in to give Sister Henderson a 'Hi y'all,' the promise of magic mornings returned to the Store and spread itself over the family in washed life waves.

— Maya Angelou
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings



Everybody in the South remembers a favorite place to be, where folks in town met to gossip, shop, eat, or just pull up a stool to sit a spell between chores: the local hotel, the drug store, the coffee shop, the lunch counter at the dime store. Meredith had such a friendly, familiar place—the Bee Hive. Dru Morgan Hinsley, '52, manager of the supply store since 1953, remembers how it was in the Bee Hive with the same passion-

ate detail Maya Angelou brings to the memory of her grandmother's "Store," more properly designated the Wm. Johnson General Merchandise Store. No place on the Meredith campus was more aptly named, according to Mrs. Hinsley. "It swarmed like a hive of bees," she says. And the day of the big move to the newly constructed student center was, she adds, "the saddest day of my life."



Dru Morgan Hinsley (right) with Bee Hive staff



Bee Hive wall, traditionally painted by senior class

Actually, there was another “store,” also called the Bee Hive, before the second one came into existence—located, according to Mrs. Hinsley, in a small house “under the big tree beside Faircloth.” The stockroom was upstairs, and downstairs the students sold notebook paper, bottled drinks, and ice cream. When the “new” Bee Hive was built on the back of the old auditorium where music classes had been held, it seemed palatial. Mrs. Hinsley describes the atmosphere of this beloved campus hang-out as “marvelous.” The Bee Hive opened at seven a.m. and literally hummed with activity until eleven p.m. each day. “You just can’t imagine how much the faculty and students used it,” Mrs. Hinsley recalls. President Carlyle Campbell, who, she remembers, didn’t like fountain drinks, used to come in every day, go over to the vending machine, and buy himself a bottle of Coca Cola for five cents. “Then he’d go on over and sit down with the students, who liked fountain cokes better,” she says. A sixteen-ounce fountain drink was ten cents. Everybody gathered several times a day, starting early in the morning when the faculty came by for coffee before classes started. There were no distinctions between faculty and students, and the informality of the place appealed to Mrs. Hinsley: “We knew everything about the faculty then—their children’s names, whether they had had a fight that morning with their husbands or wives.” And the television set made the place even more desirable. “TV was very, very new then, and I got a man who worked at Walker Martin appliance to donate a Sylvania to the Bee Hive,” Mrs. Hinsley says. “I can still see that old Sylvania sitting there,” she laughs.

Of course, the Bee Hive also sold textbooks, school supplies, and a limited selection of gift items. According to Mrs. Hinsley, the textbooks were stored in a little room about the size of the “cubicles” used for faculty offices. It was so crowded, she says, “that we sold books out the window to the students.” And the gift items were hardly the sophisticated and varied array of sweatshirts, shorts, coffee mugs, and other “Meredith” paraphernalia now available to students. “We had two terrycloth T-shirts,” says Mrs. Hinsley. “One with a V-neck and one with a round neck.”

But what the Bee Hive really “sold” was cordiality and conviviality among faculty, students, and administrators—an invaluable commodity. When the new student center was ready for occupancy and Mrs. Hinsley was told to move out of the Bee Hive, she said to President Bruce Heilman, “I can move the merchandise, but I can’t move the atmosphere.” Mrs. Hinsley sees that move as the beginning of the end of real camaraderie and intimacy among administrators, students, and faculty. The new student center had a separate faculty lounge, and faculty lounges were also located in each new classroom building. She says, “It was the first time the faculty had ever been segregated from the students.” And, according to Mrs. Hinsley,



Bee Hive



life at Meredith has never been quite the same. Students who don't remember the Bee Hive may not be aware of how much this favorite Meredith gathering place helped to inspire closeness and real friendship among all the folks on the Meredith campus. But Mrs. Hinsley remembers—and notes the irony of at least some of the so-called “progressive” decisions about the building of modern facilities. The faculty used the lounge in the new student center so seldom that it was eventually renovated and replaced by a counseling center for students. Maybe if the students could chat informally and daily with faculty members—as President Carlyle Campbell and sundry professors once did—they wouldn't need counseling.





Bee Hive interior



*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
 A stately pleasure dome decree:
 Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
 Through caverns measureless to man
 Down to a sunless sea.
 So twice five miles of fertile ground
 With walls and towers were girdled round:
 And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
 Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
 And here were forests ancient as the hills,
 Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.*

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge
Kubla Khan



Dreams begin in the mind's eye, a dim stirring of light, shape, color hovering in the imagination. But dreams do not have to stay in that shimmering place of other-worldly longing. A dream that becomes reality is as close as a parcel of land, a stack of bricks and mortar, an architect's blueprint, an army of willing laborers. Riding along the high road overlooking Meredith College, the late afternoon sun casting remarkable lights and shadows over the campus spread below, travelers can see the embodiment of a dream.

From this high vantagepoint, the Meredith campus looks very like a poet's vision—with wide expanses of swaying grass, fields of wildflowers, manicured gardens, tall trees, cool fountains, formidable buildings of elegant Georgian design or sleek modernity, still pools of water



Spring Fling





mirroring the paradox of constant change. Situated at the edge of industrial and commercial development, nudging the bustling interstate highway, close by the familiar residences and shady streets of quiet neighborhoods, the Meredith campus is a kind of Xanadu—not so grandly exotic as Coleridge’s fragmentary dream, not so foreign or inaccessible as that other world of poets, saints, and sages—but lovely nonetheless, and equally compelling to weary urbanites. The townspeople come, with dogs, frisbees, blankets, picnic coolers, kites, cameras, babies. They park their cars along the wide avenue leading to the domed edifice that is the focal point of Meredith’s architectural design. They find a spot of grass under a spreading shade tree, close their eyes, and dream in the world that dreams made.



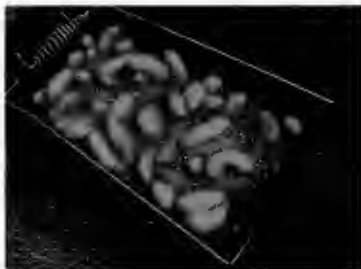
*At mete well y-taught was she withalle:
 She let no morsel from hir lippes falle,
 Ne wet hir fingers in hir sauce deepe;
 Well coud she carry a morsel, and well keepe
 That no drop ne fill upon hir brest.
 In curteisy was set full muchel hir lest.
 Hir overlippe wiped she so clene
 That in hir cup there was no ferthing seene
 Of grece, whan she drunken had hir draughte.
 Full seemely after hir mete she raughte.*

—Geoffrey Chaucer
The Canterbury Tales



Academicians and artists have long understood the primitive hierarchy of human performance and achievement: it is, simply, that before the soul can be fed the physical appetites must be satisfied. Geniuses like poet William Blake might have been able to write while the wolf howled at the door and the cupboard lay bare, but the rest of humankind would be better served in scholarship and creativity by receiving, first, a generous portion of mutton, a deep draught of ale, a choice morsel of chocolate. Before literature, comes food. Then spiritual and intellectual epiphanies may follow. Great works of art, great inventions, and great ideas seldom emanate from concentration camps and skid-row slums.

Everyone has smiled and nodded over the potables and edibles in favorite novels: the ladies of Cranford struggling to lift a cube of sugar with the maddeningly



inadequate tongs offered in genteel society; young Oliver Twist demanding another bowl of porridge in front of a roomful of shocked and ravenous schoolboys; Chaucer's dainty Prioress,

consuming her victuals with amusing decorum; Odysseus and Telemachus sitting down to elaborate feasts in the great halls of Greek warriors and kings. In fact, literary works in which the characters never dine, never find their eyes riveted to steaming puddings,

never reach greedily for another slab of pie are somehow suspect. The authors, in their rarefied neglect of bodily satisfactions and pleasures, have floated away from the world, into a region where neither angels nor humans would care to go. Even Adam and Eve had to eat, though *what* they ate should have

been a matter for far more careful consideration. Poet Robert Browning understood that the way to the soul is through the body, not around it. No aspect of creation can be denied, neither the gnawing hunger that drives humans to the pantry nor the restless spirit that drives them to their knees.

For a hundred years, Meredith students have been eating, sometimes fastidiously as the Prioress, sometimes ravenously as young Oliver, sometimes gratefully as the renowned Odysseus after a long period of privation at sea. Before the campus moved to its present site, the all-important dining room and kitchen were located on the first floor of the Central Building, along with administrative offices, the president's living quarters, laboratories, and classrooms. Mrs. Mary Seay and Mrs. Laura B. Watson served respectively as housekeeper and matron of the Baptist Female University,





Veranda of Belk Dining Hall



Belk Dining Hall interior

working under adverse conditions to make certain the young women were properly housed and nourished. One alumna described these household “managers” as “fine women of the homespun variety,” and added, as a kind of afterthought to the possible charge of snobbery, “which, in my opinion, is the best yet.” Like many women in literature and life, Mrs. Seay and Mrs. Watson worked against severe limitations of money, space, and convenience. Mary Lynch Johnson sums up the woeful inadequacies of these early domestic accommodations: “There were too few dishes, too few cooking utensils, too little shelf and table space in the kitchen for what they did have.” But, like Faulkner’s Dilsey, these women “endured,” making do with what they did have and successfully feeding the boarding students, who then numbered fewer than 200.

Memories of lofty intellectual pursuits and deep spiritual revelations are very fine and noble, but memory more often centers on the aroma of biscuits, the taste of country ham and spoon bread on a brisk fall morning. Alumnae of the Baptist Female University generally recall the wonderfully concrete details of daily, domestic reality. Before alumna Margaret Shields Everett mentions the spiritual insights and inspiration gained in chapel programs, she recalls, with an abundance of detail that would delight many an English teacher, the morning ritual of boarding students at the Baptist Female University:

The day began with an early breakfast, and a good one. Mrs. Seay was an excellent dietitian, although I doubt if ever she used the word. We came down to breakfast in our “tea jackets,” dainty little lace-trimmed garments resembling the present-day bed jacket. Otherwise we were perfectly groomed, hair arranged in

the style of the day—pompadour, rats, and all. We sat in companies of sixteen at each table, with two faculty members who supervised our deportment.

And certain students were especially glad to be able to eat. They were classified as “needy” and given the opportunity to wait on tables to reduce their tuition costs by eight dollars a month. Still other needy students, who lived in the Adams building, were allowed to cut costs by preparing and serving their own meals. The average monthly cost of their meals was then less than four dollars.

On the new campus, the dining facilities and services were improved, even as the codes of etiquette and dress were considerably relaxed. A separate dining hall and kitchen were erected in 1928 on the north side of the quadrangle and opposite the administration building. The dining hall was the last building in the quadrangle to be named. At the dedication on Founders’ Day, February 27, 1970, the building was named Belk Hall, in honor of Carol Grotnes Belk, wife of Irwin Belk, who had financed renovations of the building. Both the main dining room and the more intimate President’s Dining Room downstairs are attractively decorated, evoking some of the elegance and style now sacrificed to fast-paced living and casual eating.

In the years preceding this renovation, the tone and style of dining at Meredith were already beginning to change. Gone were the “tea jackets,” though certain basic standards of decorum continued to be observed on the new campus. The food was originally served “family style.” Students who worked as assistants in the dining hall set the tables and served the food, each student being responsible for two tables. Kathleen Reynolds, assistant director of food services, notes that over the years both the patterns of behavior and the attire of students have changed. When she first came to Meredith over fifteen years ago, students were not allowed to come to the dining room wearing cut-off jeans, tank





Dining hall on old campus

tops, or rollers in their hair. On Sundays, everyone dressed up for meals, and the crowds were large. Meredith students went to church and brought boy-friends or other guests "home" for Sunday dinner. Tablecloths were standard items at this Sabbath meal. Now, students are more mobile, with ready access to their own cars and a tendency to scatter on weekends or to eat on the run. They like food they can carry out in their hands, meals that can be hastily wedged between a midterm examination and a fraternity party at State or Carolina. Except for special occasions, such as the truly elegant Christmas dinner—complete with lovely ice sculptures, flowers, and candles—students wear what they please and are expected simply to maintain tolerable levels of noise. Even so, the chatter is sometimes deafening, as students move in and out of the dining room, sometimes grabbing a sandwich to take to their rooms, occasionally coming in only to get an ice-cream cone or a little yogurt.

When the dining hall changed from family-style service to "line service," i.e., cafeteria style, the number of eating choices dramatically increased. Students can choose from among two to three entrees, four

vegetables, and an array of desserts and salads; or they can opt for a quick trip to the deli bar, salad bar, or ice-cream machine. A suggestion box located in the dining room is given careful, daily attention by the staff. Within the restrictions imposed by cost and availability, staff members try to accommodate the students' favorite food requests. "If we get a note in the box saying somebody wants honey graham crackers, the next week the student gets honey graham crackers," Ms. Gillespie says. Dining staffpersons serve three



Annual luncheon sponsored by international students

meals a day throughout the year, and in the winter months employees work six days a week to make certain that Meredith students are properly nourished. Heidi Gillespie, who oversees all catering services, and Kathleen Reynolds agree that students and faculty alike are more health conscious than ever before. The staff serves much less beef and far more poultry, and menus are also planned as to accommodate vegetarians. Heidi Gillespie says, "We're trying to make sure items on our menu are adaptable to people's dietary needs." Do students have any foods they absolutely refuse to eat? "They won't touch veal," says Ms. Gillespie, the result not so much of personal preference but of public issues concerning humane treatment of animals. Students' eating tastes are governed, therefore, by matters other than taste or health. They make their choices based also on growing concern for the environment and its creatures. At the request of the students, the non-biodegradable styrofoam products were replaced by foam products less harmful to the environment. And the yogurt is 98% fat free. Even visitors to campus receive the same dietary consideration. A group of organic farmers,

who advocate chemical-free, natural agricultural methods, were served a choice of chicken Parmesan or spinach lasagne, blasting the stereotypical notion that farmers are meat-and-potatoes people.

But food service has moved beyond the four walls of Belk Hall. A full-time catering service operates on campus, supplying refreshments and full-scale meals for events both on and off campus. The catering service offers special meals for events such as luncheons and dinners for the Friends of the Library, dinner parties at the president's home, awards banquets, alumnae gatherings, and holiday meals for students on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Valentine's Day. Each fall, the students enjoy a catered luau in the courtyard, with a Polynesian menu of sweet-and-sour chicken and tropical fruits. Each student is given a Hawaiian lei and "mock" mai tais are served, with, according to Ms. Gillespie, "little umbrellas and things." The luau is a sort of welcome to returning and new Meredith students. In addition, the catering service supplies food for freshman orientation; coffee-break supplies for on-campus seminars and workshops; food for receptions following honor-society inductions; even cake and



President's Dining Room

punch for wedding receptions in the chapel. Recently, during Meredith's time-honored bacchanal, Cornhuskin', the catering division of food services had its first pig pickin'.

The importance of food and festivity is not lost on Meredith faculty members and students, who congregate daily in the dining hall for fast food or slow, earnest debates or casual conversation. Newcomers to the Meredith campus are quick to acclimate themselves to the notion that all special occasions and even routine matters such as business or departmental meetings are likely to feature good food, beautifully served. At an autograph party held in the library, a Meredith faculty member was heard to say to a shy newcomer, after several rounds of party mints, petit fours, salted nuts, and punch, "Well, I see you've survived the Meredith trial by tea party." Janet Freeman, head librarian, has even accused the English department of being "so civilized" because department members regularly serve brie, grapes, and home-baked delicacies to make their meeting agendas more palatable, to shape their primitive human natures—"red in tooth and claw"—into English gardens of tasteful topiaries. In fact, all the literary greats from Chaucer to James Joyce, from Jane Austen to Colette, have known that good food and good conversation are as essential to easing life's tribulations as sunlight dancing through treetops, divine grace falling on hopeless sinners.



It may be possible to do without dancing entirely. Instances have been known of young people passing many, many months successively without being at a ball of any description, and no material injury accrue to body or mind. . . .

—Jane Austen
Emma



Many, many Baptists in the last century have been deadly earnest about what Jane Austen asserts with delicious irony. These trustees, religious leaders, and institutional authorities were fixed in their view that dancing could not help and would most assuredly hurt a young girl's progress toward sober, responsible adulthood. Young women were to have absolutely no need for heady spins, dips, and twirls around the dance floor—and precious little need for any other social activity. For well over half of Meredith's first century, Baptist movers and shakers kept their daughters' feet planted squarely on the ground, their ankles primly crossed, and their minds on loftier matters. The social activities of students at the Baptist Female Uni-



Winter Dance, '90

versity were limited to literary evenings with Browning or Tennyson, theatrical productions, concerts and recitals, church picnics, and formal banquets. The considerable energies and rushing adrenaline of these young "ladies" were carefully channeled into student government, academics, and approved cultural pursuits.

But Jane Austen's wry amusement over the priorities and predilections of young people is not lost on mature readers—even Baptists—who nod and smile, recalling their own first, fluttering days of adolescent delirium and romance. Even the parents in those early years of strict decorum and high moral standards could not conceal their delight in the vitality and charm of these women. Archibald Johnson, an enthusiastic supporter of the Baptist Female University and the father of four daughters who later graduated from that institution, was irrepressible in his assessment of the young women gathered at one University commencement. He wrote, "The girls are bright and happy as they can be. They are very pretty, too, though it would never do to tell them so." Even Mr. Johnson's metaphors betrayed his pleasure in the youth and beauty of these students. In an issue of *Charity and Children*, Johnson described the newly founded Baptist Female University as "the prettiest, plumpest, winsomest" of the colleges of his day.

The "girls" in whom Archibald Johnson delighted may have been full of life and utterly charming, but they could not dance. Throughout those early years, Meredith women were strangely gratified by small triumphs and treats in their "extracurricular" activities. In a 1949 issue of the *Alumnae Magazine*, Margaret Shields Everett recalled traveling to Meredith to begin her education. On this thrilling train ride from Scotland Neck to Raleigh, she had her first sip of "a new beverage, coca-cola" and reveled in the unchaperoned



company of a trainload of Wake Forest boys who also happened to be going to school. But such incidents, though certainly fortuitous, were exceedingly rare. One father's comment about his daughter's supervision at college more accurately reflects the general view. In 1900, he intoned, "I do not want her to go anywhere or see anybody except in the presence of the faculty." Even shopping trips to Fayetteville Street, which students were permitted only once a week, were made in the company of a faculty member.

Gradually, however, though the process has surely seemed slow to many Meredith students, the social restrictions imposed in the first half of the Meredith's history have been eased in the second. Meredith women eventually began to enjoy, in measured doses, the heady elixir of strolls to church with the boy of the moment—accompanied, of course, by a chaperone. Even in 1919, if they had attended the requisite number of literary society meetings, the young women could receive male callers on Saturday nights from eight until ten. But though Meredith students were allowed some courting, strolling, flirting, and blush-

ing, they still could not dance. In 1957, the Baptist State Convention again refused to allow dancing, and, according to Mary Lynch Johnson, students were "woefully disappointed."

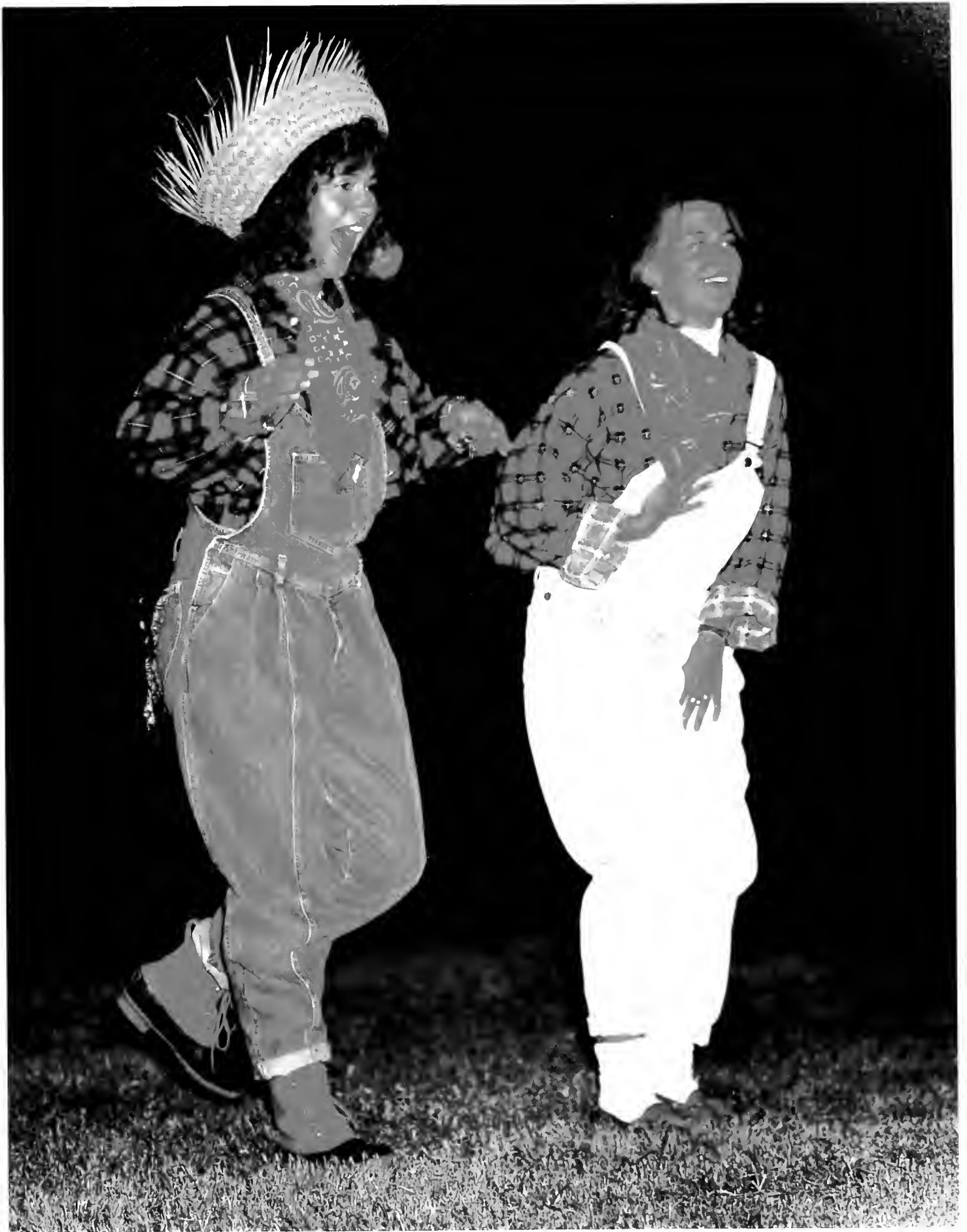
Students who attended Meredith in the very late sixties and early seventies recall that only then were dances held on the campus. The students moved rapidly to the dance floor—whether in Belk Dining Hall, the Weatherspoon gymnasium, or local hotels and convention centers—and have been dancing ever since. Traditions have even grown up around the place, time, and occasion for such dances. Meredith students regularly invite boys from North Carolina State University, Duke University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to campus mixers in the gym. Each year the Meredith Entertainment Association sponsors and directs a semi-formal winter dance, a spring formal, and another semi-formal dance for freshmen and sophomores.

The strains of music now float over the campus as regularly as the lines of Browning or Tennyson once echoed through the parlors. And though the founders

of the Baptist Female University might be watching with some disapproval from their divine vantage point, Meredith women are humming. Students are surely relieved that in this way too—the social side of being human and whole—they are enjoying a new freedom. But Jane Austen reminds us that such pleasures could hardly be deemed essential. “It may be possible to do without dancing entirely,” she writes. And we have to laugh, knowing she is exactly right and knowing, too, that we have to grow up before we are vouchsafed the gifts of humor and balance. Certainly, we can do without dancing, but such a grim prospect is highly unlikely, whether in the tight social world of Austen’s fictional English village of Highbury or at Meredith College in Raleigh. Young people seem to insist—in every generation—on toe-tapping respites from work, duty, responsibility.



Meredith Dance Theatre



As he was one day walking in the street, he saw a spacious building which all were, by the open doors, invited to enter: he followed the stream of people, and found it a school or hall of declamation, in which professors read lectures to their auditory. He fixed his eye upon a sage raised above the rest, who discoursed with great energy upon the government of the passions. His look was venerable, his action graceful, his pronunciation clear, and his diction elegant.

—Dr. Samuel Johnson
The History of Rasselas



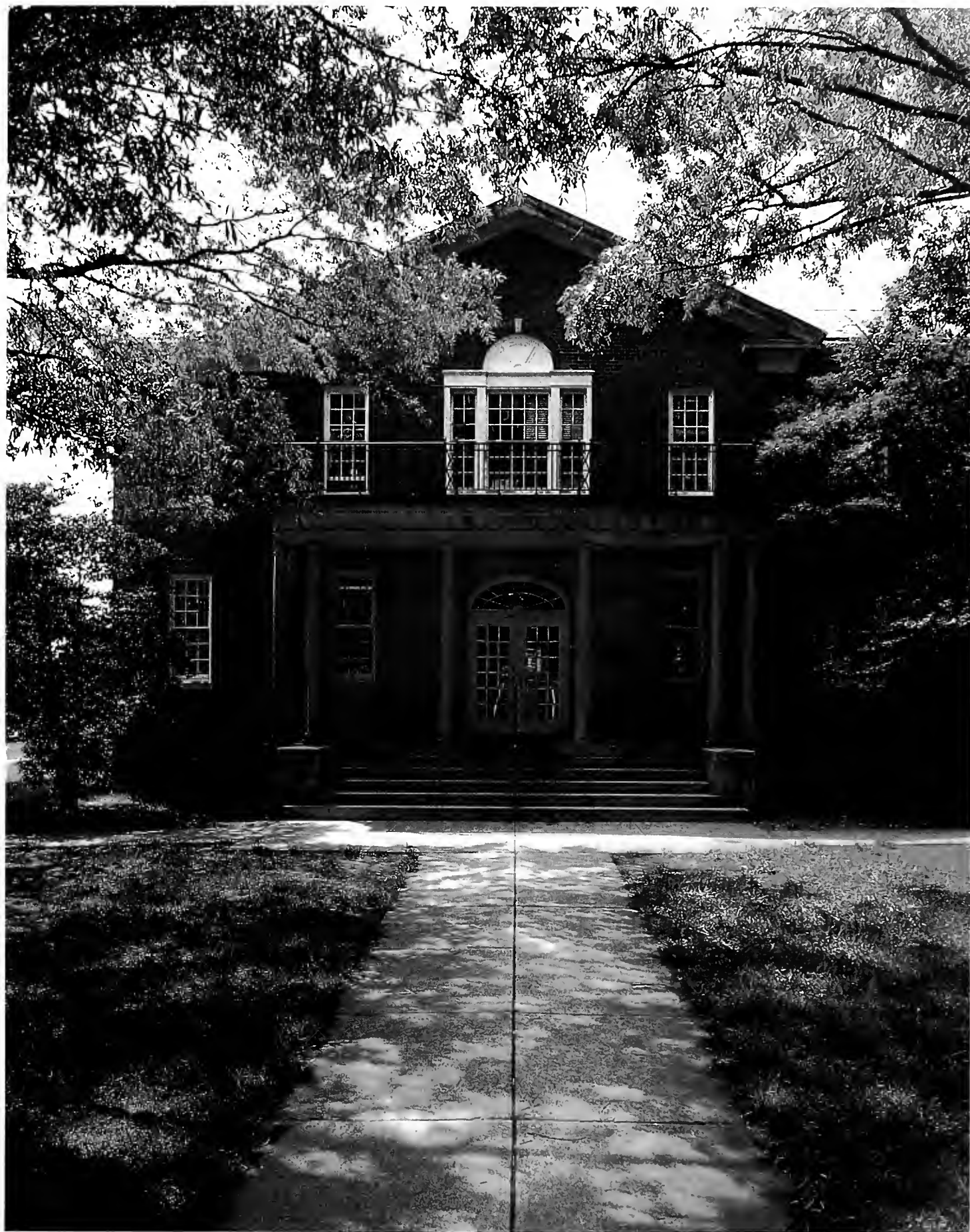
Rasselas, prince of Abyssinia, sets out in search of a life higher and worthier than the life of pleasure and ease he has previously known. Elated at having found at last an accomplished rhetorician and rationalist, Rasselas hurries to the wise old philosopher Imlac to relay the good news. But Imlac disappoints the prince. The philosopher reminds Rasselas of the “emptiness of rhetorical sound, and the inefficacy of polished periods and studied sentences.” Imlac is right. Sound without sense, reason without divine insight, eloquence without substance—all are hollow, vain pursuits, reminiscent of the empty debates of Satan’s fallen angels in *Paradise Lost*. Surely, the spectacular oratory of the finest scholars can leave students momentarily dazzled but ultimately doomed. Wind and vanity, saith the sage of the Book of Ecclesiastes. And humans tremble with the risk and danger of succumbing too readily to the enticements of glib scholars and false prophets.

But finding the gold in the sometimes tinny lectures of sundry academicians is surely what learning is all about. More often than not, the precious metal of

enduring truth is buried within variegated shafts of human experience and thought. And the building within which these priceless treasures are daily mined by students and teachers alike will have, itself, a certain shine, a certain ambiance and air that hint of heaven. So, for more than thirty years, has Joyner Hall emanated an unmistakable radiance, a timeless value, despite occasional dark pockets of pedantry and pomposity, airless cubicles of ignorance or narrow-mindedness.

There is life in Joyner—a bustling, burgeoning satisfaction as ideas butt heads with reality, as emotion and impulse gather shape and force in reasoned thought, as the poem students carry in their heads finds its rightful place in daily experience. The best professors wisely warn students against the dangers of a too simple abstraction, a self-indulgent and overwrought subjectivity. There is a place, in Joyner, for passion, but not at the expense of precision. The students pass through the halls, here and there chattering in French or Spanish; railing at an unjust professor; or pausing idly to read news on the bulletin boards about doctrinal controversies in the church, the death penalty, abortion, foreign studies, AIDS, working mothers, clinical depression or SAT scores. Students loiter in the lounges or stairwells, challenging a professor’s opinion on what to do about the homeless, practicing the opening lines of Chaucer’s “General Prologue,” waiting for advice about careers in education or sociology. So it goes with a building in which the humanities and social sciences have long been housed. Joyner is a place where *people*—not numbers or machines or techniques—are primary. The variety of subject areas represented there makes for a pleasing





Joyner Hall



cacophony of sound, a harmony of purpose—rather like a typical family, each going a separate way but nonetheless bound by common experience, kinship, a shared history.

When the new campus sprung from the center of a cotton field, only the imposing quadrangle signaled the impressive and solid campus that would some day follow. Classrooms were held in wooden buildings that looked “like barracks,” according to Ione Kemp Knight, ’43, longtime professor of English at Meredith. The classroom buildings were only one story and were intended to be temporary quarters, to be used for only ten years at the most. But the buildings remained in use for thirty or more years, until, according to Mary Lynch Johnson, new facilities became an “absolute necessity.” The “barracks” were leaky, and, as one trustee wrote of the science building, this particular classroom structure had been repaired so frequently that maintenance people were now “repairing the repairs.” Everyone was very pleased with the addition of two new buildings—Joyner Hall, completed in 1956, and Hunter Hall, the science building which was ready for use three years later.

Dr. Knight recalls that although the original wooden classroom buildings were leaky and certainly obsolete, the rooms and offices were quite adequate in size. She adds, “Of course, there were few offices.” Dr. Knight particularly remembers Mary Lynch Johnson’s classroom because “Miss Johnson,” as many colleagues called this well-known professor of English, taught all her classes in one large room which also served as her office. The room, lined with books on homemade shelves, was decorated with Dr. Johnson’s plants, personal mementos, paintings. “It was a friendly looking place,” says Dr. Knight. Of course there were no lounges or kitchens available for the all-important faculty coffee breaks. There was only one faculty kitchenette on the first floor of Vann Hall, and everybody met there daily for coffee. In addition, Mary Yarbrough, professor of chemistry and physics and later head of that department, could be counted on to brew a pot of coffee in her laboratory, where many faculty members also congregated for the substance more crucial to academic sanity than trendy therapy, more life-sustaining than DNA: the daily dose of caffeine.

But when Joyner replaced an outmoded wooden building, the change was total. Dr. Knight remembers that everything in Joyner was brand new, and nothing was brought from the old building. File cabinets, desks, equipment—everything was emblematic of fresh starts, of a startling modernity. Though Joyner, like other buildings on campus, was Georgian in style and made use of the traditional materials of limestone and brick used in the quadrangle, it was truly a state-of-the-art facility. The two-story building contained classrooms, seminar rooms, offices, a large lecture room, sound-proof recording booths, art studios, a small art gallery,



and a lounge with an adjoining kitchen. Later, the art department would move to various locations on campus before settling permanently in the new Gaddy-Hamrick art



building. More than thirty years after its opening, Joyner Hall continues to serve as home for the departments of English, history and politics, psychology, sociology and social work, religion and philosophy, and education—though plans are underway for a new building to be devoted entirely to education and psychology.

Joyner Hall was named in honor of James Yadkin Joyner, elected a trustee for the Baptist Female University in 1894 and serving as a Meredith trustee until six years before his death at the age of ninety-three. He had been the state superintendent of public instruction for many years and had done much to advance the cause of a state system of public high schools. But perhaps even more significant was his role as dean and professor of English at the State Normal and Industrial College in Greensboro, making his name an especially fitting choice for the newly constructed “liberal arts” building.

Of course, despite the move to new quarters—the comfortable lounges, handy kitchens, larger classrooms, private offices, audio-visual equipment, up-to-date maps, bulletin boards, indoor carpets, and shiny metal file cabinets, the “air” in Joyner has remained much the same over the years. Debates gather strength in the corridor. A line from Keats or Shelley catches the eye in passing. A snippet of a Latin translation lulls the ear. The coffee pot remains the faculty focal point for witty repartee. Subtly ironic cartoons from the *New Yorker* and weighty diatribes from *The Christian Century* still paper the bulletin boards. When the faculty and students moved over from a wooden building dating from an allegedly outworn past, they brought with them an army of ghosts populating the psyches and souls of even the most thoroughly modern academicians. Virgil, Cervantes, Christ, Dickinson, Colette, Jung, Freud, Meade, Montessori, Austen, Shakespeare, Wollstonecraft, the Blessed Juliana of Norwich, Kant, Bacon, Mother Teresa, Mary Magdalene, Esther, Ruth, Naomi, Sojourner Truth, Goodall, Kierkegaard, Dr. Seuss, Horney, Piaget, Woolf, Yeats, Plato, Sappho, Matute, Buddha, Wharton, McCullers, Lessing, Plath, Welty, and O’Connor haunt the corridors—a legion of poets, saints, and sages whispering eternal truths to scholars, students, or strangers passing through.



It was almost necessary to the character of a fine gentleman to have something to say about air-pumps and telescopes; and even fine ladies, now and then, thought it becoming to affect a taste for science, went in coaches and six to visit the Gresham curiosities, and broke forth into cries of delight at finding that a magnet really attracted a needle, and that a microscope really made a fly look as large as a sparrow.

—Thomas Babington Macaulay
History of England



The debate between humanists and scientists has always been heated but never more so than in the great prose works of Victorian writers in nineteenth-century England. Scientific and social progress—industrialization, urbanization, technology, democratization—gave new vigor and urgency to the arguments of those who would, on the one hand, lay emphasis on what humans felt and believed in the light of all eternity and, on the other hand, on what they could do and make and achieve for the here and now. Matthew Arnold argued for the supremacy of the soul, for the primacy of *belles lettres*. Thomas Henry Huxley favored a departure from what he perceived to be an overemphasis on classical education—with concomitant irrelevancies—and a redirecting of human energies and study toward the physical and social sciences.

But the Victorians certainly did not initiate these arguments, though in times of rapid technological and scientific advancement such disputes between humanists and scientists have always gained vigor. Ironically, Macaulay's glib assessment of popular fascinations with things scientific rather than aesthetic applies to the England of the seventeenth century, when Sir Francis Bacon, in the early years of that century, had created a vogue in science with *The Advancement of Learning*, in which he systematically classified all branches of knowledge. In *Novum Organum*, he set forth his scientific method, and in *Sylva Sylvarum*, he examined several of nature's phenomena. As Macaulay reports, because political dissent was then frowned upon, the "revolutionary spirit" of the age was given over to physics. Humans, it seems, need something at which to hurl their passions, and in seventeenth-century England, science became a fad. "Even fine ladies" were, according to Macaulay, giddily engaged

in scientific inquiry. In the year 1660, England's Royal Society was formed, later to be hilariously and darkly satirized in the third voyage in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

Unfortunately, disputes between scientists and humanists have hardened too often into an either/or mentality, harmful both to the nurture of aesthetics and to the development of a sane, progressive spirit of





pragmatism and scientific inquiry. The scoffing and scrapping between so-called moderns and so-called traditionalists can result in an intellectual and spiritual stalemate. Productive energy is wasted on ponderous or vehement criticism of teaching whatever feeds the human soul—philosophy, literature, art, languages, history, religion—and teaching whatever improves human life—physics, chemistry, biology, the social sciences, business, home economics. To ignore the past is foolish. To neglect the present and future is disastrous. The true educator must embrace all that has been known or can be known about the natural world, society, ethical values, human potential and productivity.

Though Meredith College has had its share of disputes about which aspects of learning deserve greater emphasis, this institution has never abandoned its commitment to the entire realm of human learning and endeavor. The balance is delicate. Rather than adopting a rigid either/or position, rather than misdirecting valuable energies on harsh debates between

the humanities and the sciences, Meredith has chosen to embrace both. The either/or is pointless, futile. In Meredith College's atmosphere of real devotion to all branches of knowledge, educators enjoy the freedom and stimulation of a not only/but also attitude. Macaulay is disdainful of female curiosity about such manly matters as magnetic fields and microscopes, but no such condescension exists at Meredith. Women are expected to strike the crucial balance between





preparing themselves for coping in this world and dwelling in the eternal realms with the sages, saints, and poets. In institutions of higher learning such as Meredith, the worlds of the scientist and the humanist merge into a complementary whole. Einstein, despite the scientific genius demonstrated in his Theory of Relativity, humbly acknowledged the mystery behind the face of things—that shimmering, elusive reality the poets sing about, the scientists search for. A real scientist admits what she cannot know and leaves the Unknowable to God. A real humanist respects what

can be known and applauds all human efforts to discover the Knowable. There is no exclusion here, no petty, rigid notion about what must be included or omitted from a sound academic curriculum. Learning is as big, organic, fluid as the human experience and the soul's motions. The Theory of Relativity is, to those who embrace all knowledge with equal fervor, a poem. And a poem is a beam of light on a knotty scientific problem. Tennyson insists that a poet has a duty to society and need not dwell solely in a "golden clime," with "golden stars above." In "Locksley Hall" the poet dips into the future and sees the advent of the airplane, the "Federation of the world." Finally, the poet urges the same philosophy and attitude that Meredith College carries into action: "Forward, forward let us range,/ Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change."

On Founders' Day in 1959, Hunter Hall—appropriately flanking the Carlyle Campbell Library and facing Joyner Hall, the humanities building—was dedicated. Paul Gross, the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Duke University, delivered the address entitled "Science in the Space Age." The build-





Hunter Hall

ing was named for Joseph Rufus Hunter, who had earned his doctorate in science from Johns Hopkins University, taught at Richmond College, and finally moved to Raleigh. Dr. Hunter served for many years on the Board of Trustees at Meredith and proved to be, according to President Carlyle Campbell, a man of "outstanding integrity."

As would be expected, the fields of home economics, science, and business more accurately reflect modern trends and fashions in education. These departments at Meredith have been highly mobile, moving frequently in response to increasing student demands for degrees in such fields. When Hunter Hall first opened, it housed biology, chemistry, business, economics, math, and home economics. A psychology lab was also in Hunter, psychology being then a far less popular field and boasting only one professor. There was one computer terminal in Hunter, with several terminals also in the Carlyle Campbell Library. But with the growing popularity of courses in business, computer science, psychology, and math, additional facilities became essential. The Department of Mathematics moved, for a time, into Joyner Hall, and a full-

fledged psychology department took over the space abandoned by the art department on the second floor of Joyner Hall. Ultimately, Harris Hall, completed in June of 1982 and dedicated in the fall of that year, became the home for business, economics, mathematics, and computer science. Biology, chemistry, physics, and home economics remained in Hunter Hall.

Certainly, the ideas articulated by philosophers, theoreticians, artists, academicians, historians, and scientists in the nineteenth century have radically influenced education in this century. We do not live in a vacuum, despite youthful convictions that only the here-and-now matters, only the immediately useful seems appropriate to learning. Meredith College has understood and demonstrated this fundamental conviction about education. It is what the tired professor says to the querulous student after a classroom lecture. When the student asks the age-old question, "Will this count?" the professor answers, with all the energy she can muster, "Everything counts." And the gap between what we know and what we can do, in this world or the next, mercifully narrows.



*And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,
In the sun that is young once only,
Time let me play and be
Golden in the mercy of his means . . .*

— Dylan Thomas
Fern Hill

*All that winter in the afternoon at four o'clock precisely
the voice ran through the halls. 'Walking, walking,' it
cried, with a sort of falsely cheerful note of invitation, an
affected note of persuasion. Everyone promptly appeared, a
few moments after the call, their hats and gloves already
on, and more or less warmly clad, according to the state of
the weather. The young women from the Physical
Education Department were invariably young, brisk, and
slender; they wore short skirts, leather jackets, bright
mittens, and bright woolen socks. They walked into the
rooms of the laggards. The laggards got into their hats and
coats and came along.*

— Louise Bogan
Journey Around My Room



As different and as distant as bright stars from cold stones are these two poets' attitudes toward the pleasures and pains of physical motion. A child knows nothing of the lethargy and apathy that must be overcome by world-weary, bone-tired adults before they can move briskly forth into the rough weather where health and strength await them. The intellect is willing, but the body resists. The sighs, objections, and excuses range themselves like fierce sentinels around the impulse—springing from childhood memories of play and freedom and rosy-cheeked health—to romp, run, skip, jump, hop, climb, revel in the green fields of a welcoming day. The adolescent falls somewhere between these antithetical attitudes. If tiresome vanity or deadly drill has not entirely extinguished the spark of childish vitality and joy in play, young women can recover some of the spontaneity they knew as children. And if sedentary lives and unwholesome habits have not entirely robbed them of sound, sturdy bod-



ies, they can move with ease and grace even through arduous calisthenics and vigorous athletic games.

Educators—and even the sage ancients of classical Greece and Rome—have long recognized the importance of health and vigor in achieving maximum mental and emotional stability and power. The body is one with the mind, each serving the other, each requiring mental and physical alertness, flexibility, endurance. Thus, for a hundred years at Meredith, teachers and administrators have provided students with the requisite balance of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. Physical education, in fact, is very much a science, with more and more evidence accumulating to support the ancient Greek supposition: namely, that sound minds will be sounder for inhabiting sound bodies.

For many years, the physical education program at Meredith was housed in a large wooden building which was nothing more, really, than “a big room with lots of windows,” according to Ione Kemp Knight. Jay Massey—who came to Meredith as head of the physical education department in 1957 and was, in 1943 and 1944, a student at Meredith—recalls the peculiarities

of this original wooden structure. When she was a student at Meredith, even the rafters of the building were exposed. She says, “In the old building, the floor was so bad we couldn’t hurt it.” Consequently, “we even had roller-skating in there.” And the floor was as unsteady as it was bumpy. When students were folk-dancing, the record player needle bounced right out of the grooves. A piano then served as a more reliable accompaniment to these folk-dancing rehearsals. But there was no place to store the piano, and so it was rolled into the single small bathroom in the building. When the piano tuner came to do his work, he remarked that he had tuned pianos in every room of the house but never in the bathroom. Mrs. Massey sums up: “Meredith had a good program in a poor facility,” a familiar litany among those who experienced life in those outmoded wooden buildings around the quadrangle. Miss Ellen Brewer was heard to remark, when two of the wooden buildings were torn down to make way for new classroom facilities, that the buildings would have fallen down a lot sooner “but the termites were holding hands.”

However, shaky floors and an awkwardly stored



Weather-Sports and Physical Education-Dance Building



piano were not the only trials in those early days of Meredith's physical education program. Dr. Knight blanches at the memory of the gym suits all students were required to wear. They were, in a word, "terrible"—big, one-piece uniforms that came to about midway on the calf. "They were maroon!" she groans. "We hated them." But glamor in fitness was not the high-priority issue it is today. Dr. Knight attended the college right after the Great Depression, and nobody had money even for a coke in the Bee Hive after a heated basketball game, much less for the chic sports attire of today's fitness enthusiasts. The shapeless maroon gym suits were standard issue and were accepted as one of the necessary evils of collegiate sports. And the amenities that students have come to take for granted were, in those days, nonexistent. There were no showers or locker rooms in the old gyms. And certainly there was no air conditioning to refresh students engaged in vigorous activities. Presumably, the students simply dragged themselves back to the dormitories after a volleyball game, there to recover from heat prostration, perhaps with a hasty splash of water on their faces and a quick rest in front of an open window.

Even, however, under such adverse conditions, the students in those days enjoyed a variety of sports and recreations, despite a very limited staff. Mrs. Massey remembers that even in 1970, when the new gymnasium opened, there were only three additional staff members, one of whom was part-time. These four, including long-time staff member Helena Allen, managed a program that included golf, equitation, basketball, field hockey, volleyball, badminton, modern dance, ballet, and the aforementioned folk-dancing. Until the new gymnasium was built, swimming instruction in life-saving took place at the Y, and there was also bowling instruction, which has always been an off-campus activity. As recently as 1989, the stables closed at Meredith, and equitation now is taught off campus as well. For years gymnastics was a part of the program, but the high cost of liability insurance, the difficulties of storing equipment, and the lack of student interest brought an end to the gymnastics program. Besides, according to Mrs. Massey, gymnastics is a sport that requires training starting from a very early age.

Though the physical-education staff remained small, very likely requiring an astonishing flexibility and





strength among this group of professors, the construction of a long-overdue physical education facility enlarged the scope and variety of available courses. Mrs. Massey says, "When the new building opened I thought I had died and gone to heaven." The Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation now boasted an 800,000 dollar facility, complete with a gymnasium, swimming pool, a large dance studio, a classroom with audio-visual equipment, faculty offices, a lounge, showers, and lockers. The basketball and tennis courts were of regulation size, and the gymnasium could seat 670 people. Shearon Harris, then chairman of the Board of Trustees, presided over the dedication of this building on September 25, 1970. The building was named in honor of James Raymond Weatherspoon, a founder of the Durham Life Insurance Company, whose gift paid for half of the cost of the building's construction. The building is no longer called the "gym" but, rather, the Weatherspoon Physical Education-Dance Building.

Mrs. Massey vividly recalls some of the early experiences in the new Weatherspoon Building. On moving day, the physical-education staff members were

instructed to be out of the old gymnasium by noon. There was not much to move—only the piano, some balls and other sports equipment, and the office typewriter. All other furniture was to be left behind. Mrs. Massey says that the staff moved out at the required time, and by eight o'clock in the evening, the old gymnasium had been demolished and completely hauled away. Not a trace of it remained. But the move occurred in June, and not until the dedication day in September did Mrs. Massey have a desk in her office. She spent the summer working on the floor.

At the end of the first year of operation, another bizarre incident occurred. Mrs. Massey says, "President Heilman was hell-bent on having graduation in the new Weatherspoon Building, even though students, faculty, and everybody else were against the idea. They wanted to have it in the auditorium." But President Heilman was so proud of the building that he insisted, and the graduation took place there. "The faculty had to line up around the swimming pool," Mrs. Massey remembers. "The place was jam-packed, and somebody accidentally leaned against the fire alarm right in the middle of graduation ceremonies."

Dean Burris hollered at me to turn off the alarm, and I didn't have a the slightest idea where it was."

A few years ago, the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation was renamed the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Dance—more accurately reflecting, in Mrs. Massey's view, recent changes in the program. Meredith now offers a dance major and a minor in physical education with a fitness emphasis. In addition, there are courses in aerobics, weight training, aquatic fitness, conditioning, and, of course, "lots of dance." Meredith has two performing groups—the Meredith Dance Theatre and the Meredith Aqua Angels—as well as five intercollegiate sports, including golf, tennis, volleyball, basketball, and softball. Meredith teams play in the NCAA Division III, the non-scholarship division.

Whereas the old building was regularly used for student registration as well as sports, the Weatherspoon Building is often the site of heated basketball games between faculty and students; swimming and aerobics sessions for students as well as faculty members and their families; and occasional meetings. Students, as passionate today about fitness and fashion as they

were once passionate about weekend passes or surreptitiously puffed cigarettes, often voluntarily work out on the exercise equipment in the gymnasium or spend hours bouncing around the campus driveways and roads, walking and jogging away demon cellulite and calories from late-night pizza orgies. As these young women march purposefully up and down Ridge Road or around the quadrangle—with earphones attached to their heads and arms swinging—faculty members wonder when the students are going to be sedentary long enough to learn their memory lines or write their research papers. Certainly the attention to the body is a welcome change from sluggish habits and physical neglect more common in earlier generations. Perhaps the body sends signals to the brain, and the students wisely reason that if they look good and feel fine they will think more clearly and perform with greater confidence. Scientists support the view. And so do those who for years have blown whistles, tossed up the ball, and challenged generations of Meredith students to hustle up and down the court—even the laggards who would just as soon lie down and turn their faces to the wall until the fitness impulse passes.



When a great office is vacant either by death or disgrace (which often happens) five or six of those candidates petition the Emperor to entertain his Majesty and the court with a dance on the rope, and whoever jumps the highest without falling, succeeds in the office. . . . Flinnap, the Treasurer, is allowed to cut a caper on the straight rope, at least an inch higher than any other lord in the whole empire. I have seen him do the summerset several times together upon a trencher fixed on the straight rope, which is no bigger than a common packthread in England.

— Jonathan Swift
Gulliver's Travels



When Gulliver visits the Lilliputians—"diminutive mortals" who are "somewhat longer" than his middle finger—he is intrigued by their odd customs and entertainments: the rope-dancing; the bizarre practice of offering silk threads of blue, red, and green to whoever can wriggle under or leap over the Emperor's stick with the "most agility"; the whimsical rivalry between the exiled Blefescudians and the Lilliputians, based on the issue of whether eggs must be broken at the little or the big end. Of course, Gulliver never visited the Meredith campus, but were he to find himself in this strange society, he would no doubt be equally fascinated and bewildered by the assortment of activities and competitions in which the Meredith students have long been engaged. Play is tricky. From the inside it seems perfectly reasonable to the children gathered under a pup tent in the back yard, chanting all manner of nonsense and operating under a code of behavior unintelligible to the Brobdingnagian-sized adults who chance to peep behind the drawn canvas. To an outsider looking in, the "play" of traditions and customs seems absurd. But there is a certain logic behind these games and entertainments—a long accumulation of bits of history, habits, and expectations that at last bind the newcomer firmly to the sturdy ground across which such frothy, frenetic romps occur. But for a time, every incoming freshman is Gulliver, watching from the sidelines while seasoned upperclasswomen don costumes, sing ditties, toss toilet paper in the treetops, march in parades, hold relay races, and crawl across the roof of Belk Dining Hall, looking like jewel thieves about to stage a heist.

Among the oldest of Meredith traditions is the Hid-

ing of the Crook, an event begun in 1906 by Miss Caroline B. Phelps, a dramatics teacher who donated the crook to the senior class to "increase class spirit." Each year the senior class hides the crook, and a week-long search ensues, by means of carefully worded clues. If the juniors find the crook, they win; and if the seniors outwit the juniors by hiding the crook where it can't be found, they win. Whichever class "wins" has its colors tied to the crook and carried on Class Day. The rules for the search are published annually in the student newspaper, and it reads like a list of the "articles and conditions" of Gulliver's Lilliputian imprisonment: a portion of the crook must be visible; it must be on the campus; it can't be locked up; only the juniors may look for it; it must be displayed in the cafeteria for one week before it is hidden; when the crook is found, it must be taken to the junior class president, who then presents it to the senior class president for official verification; a clue must be presented each day and cannot be coded; and the juniors have one week to look for it. According to an article in a 1983 issue of the *Twig*, the crook has been tied to a waterpipe in the tunnel, hung from rafters, and hidden in a faculty member's mattress. It has been behind the water tower, on window ledges, and on bulletin boards. But according to Carolyn Carter, '73, "one of the best places" the crook was ever hidden was in "a bunch of briar bushes beside a street marker at the intersection of Faircloth







and Moore Street." The clue, she recalls, read, "On the path to Faircloth, you'll find more." In fact, the juniors didn't find anything, and that year the senior class emerged victorious from this Lilliputian caper.

Some traditions at Meredith have died out, largely because of changes in the level of freedom and mobility enjoyed by students in the seventies and eighties at Meredith. B.J. Yeager, '47, recalls that Palio was a popular tradition when she was a student at Meredith. "It was during the war, and we had nothing else to do," she says. "We had no cars, and even if we could go off campus, we had to have chaperones, so it was hardly worth the effort." Thus Palio was a major Meredith entertainment. This tradition was begun in 1935 through the efforts of Helen Price, a Latin professor, and of Miss Marian Warner, an associate in physical education; Miss Ida Poteat, art professor; and Katherine Liles, then president of the Athletic Association. According to Mary Lynch Johnson, Palio was

"adapted from a medieval festival held annually in Siena, Italy." Sponsored by the Athletic Association, the fall event featured enormous banners, class parades and songs, games, and costumes, all of which began in a long march from the front gate and concluded on the front steps of Johnson Hall. Ms. Yeager, who was secretary to the dean of students and faculty secretary from 1948 to 1987, remembers the effort and creativity that went into this important festival. Ms. Yeager says, "Each class had a theme. Our class built a ship that was fifty feet long, and we marched down the avenue and out of that ship." Ms. Yeager didn't get to march, however. "I was the majorette for the band," she says, "so I didn't have to get up at 6:45 a.m. to practice marching." She recalls that the classes competed for top honors in costumes, songs, and overall theme. "Usually the seniors won," she laughs.

According to Ms. Yeager, Cornhuskin' eventually replaced Palio. Introduced in 1945 by Doris Peterson,



a professor in the physical education department, Cornhuskin' is an annual fall event sponsored by the Recreation Association. This tradition has grown in popularity over the years, and now holds a prominent position in the fall schedules of Meredith students, who often sag and droop in class after a grueling week of nightly events. The festivities include a parade, hog calling, tall tales, big and little sister songs, and the inevitable toilet-paper rolling in the courtyard. Cornhuskin' was first held in the courtyard and on the steps of Belk Dining Hall, but it has also been celebrated inside the dining hall and in the auditorium. According to a 1979 issue of the *Twig*, previous events have also included square dancing, chicken-calling, a faculty sing-song, bobbing for apples, and cow-milking. Each class writes a skit which is judged for originality, coherence, and continuous narrative. Costumes, songs, and tall tales are also judged. But the "rules" for Cornhuskin' reveal the absurdity and high drama of this Meredith tradition: no kidnapping; no putting Vaseline, talcum powder, peanut butter or shaving cream "any place that will cause slippery or hazardous conditions"; no food throwing; no water-throwing in dorms; no dumping of garbage in courtyard; no locking anybody in; no aerosols; no obscenity; no climbing on the roof of Jones Auditorium. Carolyn Carter recalls that during her years at Meredith, 1969-1973, "Cornhuskin' was major." It remains so even on the eve of Meredith's second century, inspiring fierce competition among classes and necessitating attendance sheets and special incentives to guarantee that after the party's over the students will still make it to their eight o'clock classes.

Another tradition that has changed dramatically over several decades, both in its popularity and pur-

poses, is the rivalry between the Phis and the Astros. These two groups were originally formed as rather sedate literary societies—the Philaretian Society and the Astrotekton Society—which, according to a 1901 college catalogue, met "every Saturday night for literary work, interspersed with music and elocution." In the early 1900's, members had to apply and were required to have a relative already in either society. It was then a "prestigious" matter to be invited to join. Carolyn Carter, however, recalls that in the late sixties and early seventies, she was attracted to Meredith precisely because of the "inclusive" nature of these popular societies. She says, "The Phis and the Astros had a lot to do with why I came to Meredith. Unlike sororities, which tend to exclude people, these societies made a concerted effort to involve all the students." She was impressed by this democratic, egalitarian philosophy. In the early seventies, Ms. Carter says, "The Phis and the Astros were still going great guns. But by my senior year, 1973, the groups had begun to change somewhat."

Changes in these literary societies began in 1928, when the meeting times shifted from Saturday nights to Monday nights. Though the purpose was still literary, the move away from weekends showed evidence of a dramatic alteration in pastimes and priorities among students. Students were no longer ready to sacrifice their Saturday nights to elocution and



Shakespeare. Gradually, service projects began to replace the literary endeavors, and applications for membership were no longer necessary. But B. J. Yeager recalls that

during her years of working at Meredith in the forties and fifties, the literary focus was still important. "On graduation weekend, the Phis and the Astros sponsored an evening on which well-known writers such as Richard Walser and Helen Bevington spoke to students. We held the gatherings on Saturday night and always took the speakers out to dinner." She says, "Dick Walser just ate it up. He thought the Meredith students were the cutest girls he'd ever seen." "We got really good speakers," she remembers, and prizes for student writing were presented on that evening.

All students were "rushed" in the fall, and quickly adopted the mascots and colors of their particular society. On Phi Day, Milton the Bear dominated the cafeteria. The bear was named for the Phi mascot, Milton, son of Professor Ralph MacLain and Juanita MacLain. The Phi color was lavender, and the Astro color was yellow. Billy the goat was the Astro mascot. On Phi Day, students breakfasted on blue-dyed eggs, and students were entertained by Phi singing groups—among them, Patti and the Promettes and Bathtub Ring IV. But, according to the *Twig*, by the mid-to-late seventies, there were "chronic attendance and participation problems in both societies." The Astros changed their constitution to admit only twenty members from the freshman class; and the Phis, which still accepted all applicants, used a point system to encourage participation in over half of the eight Phi meetings per year. Both organizations devoted themselves to good causes, including work with handicapped children, the school for the blind, multiple sclerosis, and cerebral palsy.

Stunt, another "long-standing Meredith tradition," was organized by the Meredith Recreation Association and is held in February. Classes perform skits, and the MRA chooses a theme for the event—usually some current fad. In 1984, for example, the theme was "Stunt the Video." Faculty members serve as judges, and their identities are kept a secret until the night of the event. Originally, Stunt Night was the climax of Palio, making for a hectic day of events. Martha Lou Stephenson, '50, recalls producing and directing a wild farce with an Egyptian theme for Stunt. The title? *It Sphinx*.

Of course, countless other events dot the calendar of a typical year at Meredith, giving the students a feeling of continuity and connection to the life of the college. Major campus events and traditions include freshman orientation; Parents' Weekend; Founders' Day; Christmas caroling; a faculty production of *Alice in Wonderland* performed once every four years; Class Day, during which a daisy chain is made by the sophomores in honor of their big sisters; the Honor Code







Ceremony; and the annual doll presentation, a tradition which has been going on since 1902. Play Day was for several years a popular campus event, largely because afternoon classes were cancelled. Professor Leslie Syron says, "It was sacrilegious not to call off classes for Play Day." She remembers all kinds of games, including Bridge and Chinese checkers. Now, however, no classes are cancelled for Play Day. But Carolyn Carter says, "Play Day came back in my generation. My senior year we tried to re-instate it."

But not all the traditions at Meredith are as zany or playful as Cornhuskin' or Stunt. Carolyn Carter is grateful for her experiences with Religious Emphasis Week, held each year in the early spring and sponsored by the Meredith Christian Association. In earlier years, according to Dr. Syron, sociology professor, the speaker schedule alternated between inviting a single speaker one year and a team of speakers the next. She invited Buckminster Fuller—architect, engineer, and theoretician concerned with problems of global living and technology—who came to the Meredith campus for two days during Religious Emphasis Week. In

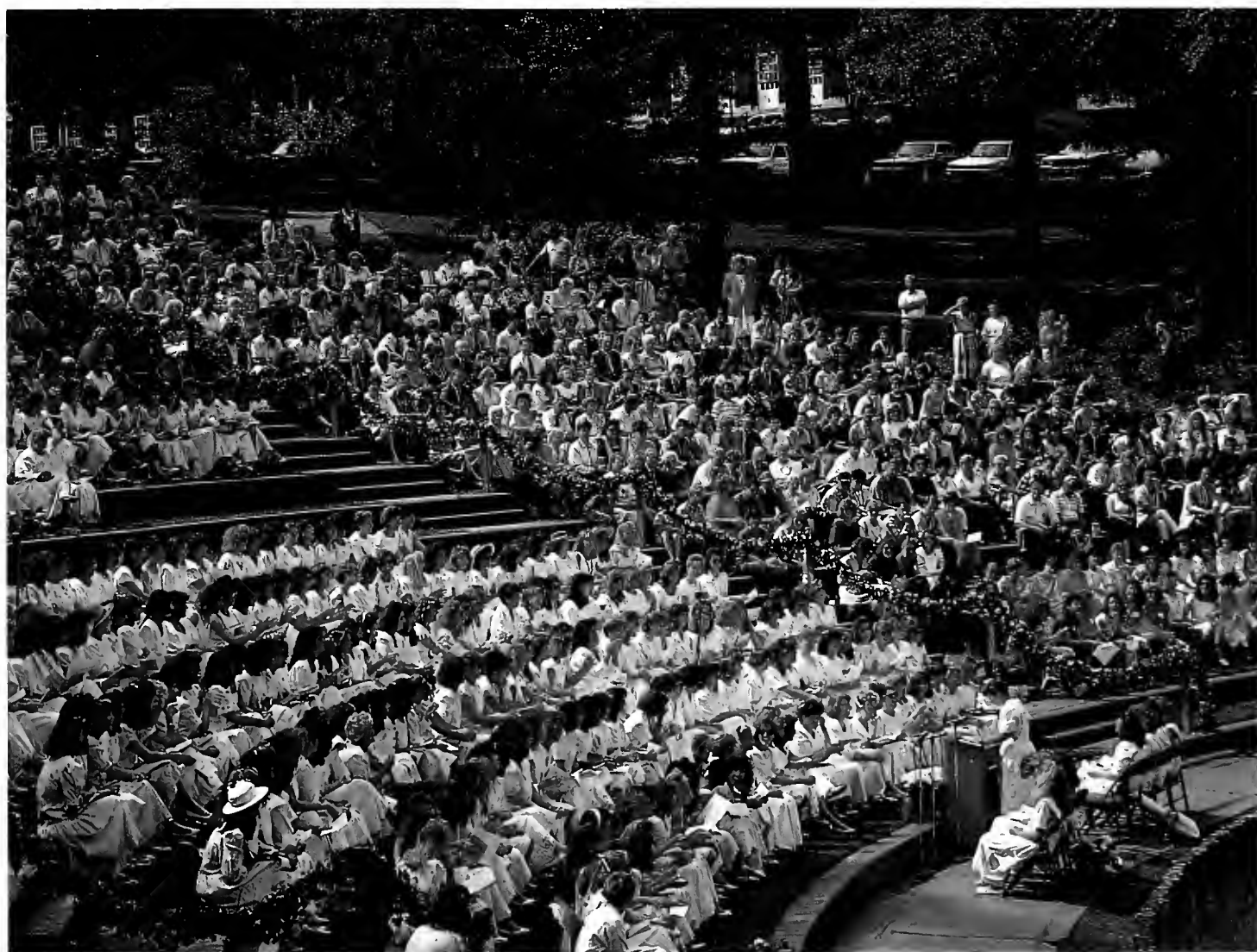
recent years, however, the MCA has invited only one main speaker, and all religious events have centered in a chosen theme. Ms. Carter remembers two such themes during the early seventies: "Synergism" and "Celebrate Life." But her favorite memory of this week-long symposium intended to inspire theological debate and spiritual regeneration is of vespers held in the dorms. Faculty members, who seldom were intimately involved in the lives of the students, came to the dorms each day during Religious Emphasis Week and presented a brief devotional. Ms. Carter says, "I remember a picture in the yearbook of Dr. Johnson sitting in a rocking chair and leading vespers."

And some Meredith "traditions" are not on the official campus calendar. "There was a sort of underground tradition I was introduced to when I came to Meredith," Carolyn Carter says. This "underground" tradition epitomizes the absurdity of the Swiftian adventures in *Gulliver's Travels*. She says, "The very first night I was there, one of the juniors said if you really want to be a part of Meredith, you have to walk across

the cafeteria roof." The challenge was to cross over the roof to Faircloth, stroll into the dormitory, and say "hi" to a surprised upperclasswoman. "You see," Ms. Carter says, "we weren't allowed to walk around outside after hours, so the trick was to get across the court without touching the ground." Security guards were everywhere, but they apparently forgot to check the roofline for wayward students. She explains that a few freshmen, maybe eighteen, were assembled by a bold leader and instructed to don dark clothes and meet at the breezeway on second-floor Stringfield at a pre-arranged time. "Somebody stood on the wall and helped us up to the roof," she says. Then the freshmen loped across the roof of Belk Dining Hall to the second-floor breezeway of Faircloth. Any junior who managed to inspire a group of timid freshmen to complete this feat could feel, according to Ms. Carter, "that she had broken us in right." Of course not every freshman was invited to participate in this midnight

venture. There was a sort of mystique, a sense of elitism and pride that bound these roof-stalkers to each other.

By the time a freshman has survived four years of stuff and nonsense, routine and ritual, ceremony and celebration, she can feel—as have countless other Meredith students—that she has been through an important rite of passage. She is on the inside looking out at a forlorn and uninformed group of novices with all the pity and amusement the Brobdingnagian king displays toward the folly and ignorance of Gulliver. Meredith women like their traditions. The traditions are what remain long after the classroom lectures have faded from memory. And though the games and pranks and stately ceremonies may seem unintelligible to campus visitors, the graduates of Meredith can punch each other in the ribs, snicker, and remember how it was the night they smeared the forbidden Vaseline on an indisputably hazardous surface.



In the first place, Cranford is in possession of the Amazons; all the holders of houses above a certain rent are women. If a married couple come to settle in the town, somehow the gentleman disappears; he is either fairly frightened to death by being the only man in the Cranford evening parties, or he is accounted for by being with his regiment, his ship, or closely engaged in business all the week in the great neighboring commercial town of Drumble, distant only twenty miles on a railroad. In short, whatever does become of the gentlemen, they are not at Cranford. What could they do if they were there?

— Mrs. Gaskell
Cranford



Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell's gently satirical opening to this popular nineteenth century novel sets forth an amusing premise unusual for her day and time—and even, in some quarters, in ours. The idea that women could not only endure but, in fact, positively delight



in the pleasure of each other's company—without the balm and bravado of male companionship—invariably brings a sly grin to the lips of many female readers. So delicately outrageous and seemingly ingenuous are the tone and style of the narrator's question that one is tempted to answer it. The women in the fictional village of Cranford are quite content with their daily round of visits, tea parties, chores, and conversation—feeling, somehow, that a male presence might send unsettling vibrations across the even surface of their lives.

Though Mrs. Gaskell posited a world dominated by women, her "village" is neither so rare nor so improbable as some might think. For centuries, women

have kept their own amiable society in small pockets and niches of the larger world. The stenographic pool, suburban neighborhood, retirement home, church circle, women's club, kitchen, parlor, and shops have traditionally been female domains, where a man entered somewhat gingerly and tentatively, seeking explanations for the smiles and good cheer he found there. Gossip has often been offered as the primary motivation for an impromptu gathering of the "ladies." But judgment falters as the outsider draws near, putting his ear to the door to catch the sense and sanity of the "chatter" inside. The talk is of politics, drainpipes, budgets, religion, literature, philosophy, ambition, and despair—every bit as much as it is of rumor, recipes, or grandchildren.

Nowhere has the society of females been so intense and ongoing as at female academies and colleges. At a women's college, the campus is Cranford. Here, the skeptics and scoffers of women's abilities to cope can study a scientifically precise, test-tube example of how well women handle the myriad responsibilities and situations of life. Opportunities for leadership, competition, achievement, and cooperation abound on such campuses. The data concerning the relationship of women's achievement in life to their attendance at all-female institutions are both powerful and provocative. Sandra Thomas, who came to Meredith in 1974 as the college's first female vice president, cites as evidence of the success of female education an important study done in 1973 by Elizabeth Tidball. The study was done, according to Dr. Thomas, "at a time when it



Meredith presidents: (from left) Carlyle Campbell, Richard Fillman Vann, and Charles Edward Bretter



seemed fashionable for women's colleges to go out of business." In fact, according to Dr. Thomas, between the years of 1968 and 1972, "about 150 women's colleges closed, went co-ed, or became coordinate with men's colleges." Certainly the question of whether any female college could survive was a matter of concern. However, she says, "When Dr. Tidball examined *Who's Who in American Women*, she found an almost perfect correlation between women who had achieved and those who had enjoyed strong female role models as undergraduates." Nearly 86 per cent of the women listed in *Who's Who* had been educated at female institutions. A significant factor was the presence of women on the faculties and staffs of these colleges in "non-traditional areas such as administration, math, business, science, and physical education." Dr. Thomas says, "I'm a product of three major co-educational institutions. All the way through, I had only four female role models—two in undergraduate school and

two at the graduate level." She says, "There's been a dearth of female role models up to now—except in female institutions." Though accused of unfashionable and possibly discriminatory attitudes toward the inclusion of males in the classroom—female institutions have been in the vanguard of providing strong female role models for young women. Dr. Thomas admits that the public institutions are slowly advancing women to higher administrative and tenured faculty positions. "But that has always been the case in women's colleges," she adds.

Certainly Meredith's founders sensed that to abandon the plan for a "female university" and throw the considerable support of the Convention solely to male institutions such as Wake Forest College would be detrimental to women's education. Leonidas Lafayette Polk wrote in an editorial in an 1890 issue of the *Progressive Farmer*: "Baptists have done nobly by Baptist boys of the state; now it [the Convention] will turn

its attention to the equally important work which is, if possible, more urgent and obligatory, that of educating the Baptist girls of the state. That it should have been so long neglected is a reproach which can only be obliterated by giving them now an institution which shall be equal in all respects to the very best and most advanced in all the land." The repeated calls among Baptist leaders of the day for an education for "girls" equal to the opportunity offered "boys" proved the progressiveness and wisdom of the philosophy still operating at Meredith College.

Dr. Thomas' experience at Meredith is evidence of the ongoing support and dignity accorded women at this institution. She says of her years here that she enjoys a "full partnership" in the administration of the college and that there has been "no struggle" in her dealings with male colleagues at the administrative level. "It has been absolutely good," she says. And she feels that Meredith is "breaking ground" for further advances for women at the administrative level. "We now have two female vice presidents, and the dean of the graduate school is female. And as positions become available, women will be very viable candidates."

Dr. Thomas is well qualified to cite the advantages of attending a female institution. Though her own education was entirely co-educational and her pri-

mary graduate work was done in university administration, her secondary interest in history and Latin American studies led her to a surprising discovery about women's education. She says, "I wondered why women in South America had such a long history of leadership. I combined two dissertations in which I was looking at the education of women in contemporary society in Chile and Latin America, focusing on their long history of socio-political involvement and leadership." Her discovery was similar to Dr. Tidball's. She says, "These women were educated in single-sex colleges." Of course Dr. Thomas in no way ignores the important contributions men have made to Meredith, whether in its founding, financial support, administrative leadership, or teaching. She says, "Meredith has never been without men." Commenting on the host of males who have passed through Meredith on the way to pick up their dates, she says, "Meredith students haven't been stuck out in a sylvan glade somewhere away from the mainstream of society." In fact, in a brief flurry of delayed liberation begun in the radical late sixties and early seventies, the issue of allowing males in the dormitories was debated in a 1982 issue of the *Twig*. Certainly, Meredith has long been a favorite haunt of male students from neighboring universities, as well as a campus where males teach, head departments, administer, maintain the



Faculty quartet: (from left) John Yarbrough, Bernard Cochran, Joe Baker, and Henry Coffey

grounds and buildings, patrol the campus, prepare meals, or serve as trustees and officers of campus organizations such as the Friends of the Carlyle Campbell Library. Only in recent years, however, have faculty salaries for women been remotely equivalent to male salaries. Miss Ione Kemp Knight recalls that women's salaries were woefully low compared to men's salaries until President Bruce Heilman succeeded President Carlyle Campbell in the late sixties.

But despite the devotion to the ideal of Meredith's founders—namely, that of educating women—at times the issue of admitting males as students has surfaced. In 1986, administrators and trustees met considerable objection when they raised the question of admitting males to the new graduate school of business. Ironically, the desire to admit males as candidates for the M.B.A. degree came from the female students in that program, according to Donald Spanton, head of the business department. He recalls, "The women said, 'We compete with men in business. Why not compete with them in school?' The majority of these women students were 'pro-men,'" Spanton says. Allen Burris,



Dean of the College, says that in fact there were requests to admit males from the graduate students in all three schools. And he adds, "There were some very precarious legal questions," including lawsuits from some males who had been denied admission. Faculty, students, and alumnae, upon learning of the decision under consideration, were up in arms. In a 1986 issue of the *Meredith Herald*, it was reported that students, faculty, and administrators met in Johnson Hall to "express their discontent at being excluded from the Board of Trustees' decision either to admit men into the graduate program or drop the program entirely." The students on this occasion sang the *Alma Mater* and chanted, "No men." Faculty and students alike wore buttons with the slogan, "Preserve the purpose." Posters read, "Meredith College, where old traditions never die." And SGA president Bridgette Parker wrote a letter to board chairman Seby B. Jones, in which she said, "I am also disappointed because this decision implies that Meredith's history of dedication solely to the education of women is at stake." She urged Mr. Jones "to do whatever is necessary to ensure that Meredith's mission of educating women remains strong and uncompromised." The *Herald* article concluded, "Weems said that the question now is not whether to admit men into the graduate program but whether to drop the program." In fact, the program has become one of the most successful on campus, though Dr. Spanton still says, "I imagine we would be much larger if we did have men in the program." However, he detects little or no lingering resentment or dissatisfaction among an already quite busy business faculty. And Dean Burris is philosophical about this major controversy of the eighties. He says that the issue of admitting men to the graduate school was "mistakenly perceived as a plot to have men infiltrate the whole school." Now, he says, "It's a dead issue. We're not going to become co-ed unless it becomes economically necessary."

Nonetheless, the passion that surfaced during this controversy is evidence of a deep commitment to the cause and advancement of women at Meredith. The women here are dedicated not so much to excluding men as to protecting the countless opportunities for leadership, solid responsibility, and congenial society that might be jeopardized or diminished by an influx of males in the classroom or around the student gov-



ernment committee tables. An early and untenable view held by Archibald McDowell, twice president of Chowan College in the mid-nineteenth century, proves the real dangers of assuming too much for men and too little for women in the way of talents and powers. He said, "Man is characterized by strength, courage, independence, and self-reliance, woman by vivacity, delicacy, sensibility and a confiding sense of dependence."

At Meredith, women are free to explore the full range of all their capabilities and traits, including those traditionally attributed to men. Like the women of Cranford, the women at Meredith can be free, whole, brave, strong, and self-sufficient. What, in fact, could men do if they were here? That is a very serious question, and one that Meredith women seem, for now, to have answered to their satisfaction.



Suddenly the notes of the deep-laboring organ burst upon the ear, falling with doubled and redoubled intensity, and rolling, as it were, huge billows of sound. How well do their volume and grandeur accord with this mighty building!

— Washington Irving
Westminster Abbey



Stately buildings filled with music, drama, or dance are places of unsettling enchantment, where the familiar faces of friends and colleagues take on a peculiar quality of unreality. In these mighty cathedrals of art and entertainment, we are strangely altered. Washington Irving, visiting the great abbey of queens, kings, and commoners alike, vibrates to the mood and atmosphere of the place as a violin string trembles to the touch of a bow. His essay is as much a record of his own transformation as of the sights and sounds he encounters there. A sensitive audience understands his strange metamorphosis. To those who passionately pursue the performing arts, the effect of billowing orchestral

chords and poignant or witty dialogue is electric. We need, from time to time, to be in places far bigger than we are, bearing witness to the vastness of the imagination, the sonorous notes of heaven, the play of light and sound on ordinary human lives.

Jones Hall—the arena for many of the grand occasions in the lives of Meredith students—is certainly not Westminster Abbey. But it has been, over the years, the setting for many of Meredith’s dynamic lectures, exciting dance performances, inspiring ceremonies, compelling dramas, and superb musical performances. Completed in 1949, this auditorium replaced yet another of the so-called “temporary”



Entrance to Jones Hall



from *Parable of the Morning Star*, 1991

wooden buildings on campus. Named in honor of trustees Sallie Bailey Jones and her husband Wesley Norwood Jones, the building offered both the college and the community an invaluable facility for all kinds of large gatherings—from a well-attended lecture by Dr. Jane Goodall, widely known scholar of chimpanzee life, to a presentation of *The Odyssey*; from a Christmas concert to a fall convocation for Meredith students. At the time of its completion, Jones Hall contained, an auditorium seating 750, a studio theater seating 220, several classrooms, eighteen practice rooms with pianos, three practice rooms with organs, and numerous studios for instructors.

The dedication of Jones Hall on September 27, 1949 fell on Founders' Day and marked the fiftieth anniversary of Meredith College. Dr. Johnson writes that engraved invitations were sent to those participating in this important event. The day's round of speakers included Senator Frank Graham in the morning and Ralph McGill, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, in the evening. Norma Rose, former head of the English department and beloved mentor and teacher, wrote in the *Alumnae Magazine*: "An alert student body, a de-

voted faculty and staff, and a host of friends present for the dedication of a spacious and beautiful auditorium—these were her evidences of her present blessings. But equally significant for those who know and love the College was the promise which the day held for the future."

Indeed, Dr. Rose's prophecy proved accurate. Over the years since 1949, the auditorium has undergone numerous changes that reflect a spirit open to the possibilities and potential of such a facility. David Lynch, who came to Meredith in 1969 and is head of the Department of Music, Speech, and Theatre, recalls some of the more practical alterations to the auditorium. The acoustics, he remembers, were "terrible," largely because of difficulties the builders encountered along the way. Despite the solid foundation of intention and aspiration that went into the planning of this building, Dr. Lynch says, laughing, "It was a house built on sand." Much of the money that would otherwise have been available for better acoustics and sound-proof practice rooms went into the sub-structure of Jones Hall. He says, "When they dug the hole for Jones, they just kept digging and digging through





sand and mud, looking for solid ground." Consequently, the cost of building was far more than expected, and to this day "there are cracks in the walls where the foundation keeps shifting." Cutting costs by eliminating sound-proofing in the practice rooms was, he says, a "disaster for the music department." And he adds, "Termites love Jones. They eat concrete, I guess."

But many of the problems created by these early construction difficulties were overcome by 1978, when the renovation of Jones Hall was completed. At that time, the art and drama departments were expanded, practice rooms were sound-proofed, a dark room and developing rooms were added, space was remodeled for art education, and the small auditorium that had been used for student recitals was transformed into a theater-in-the-round for drama and choral performances. In addition, in recent years Jones Hall has added a Writing Center and an Office of Continuing Education. Today, all the theater productions are in Jones Hall, as well as any concerts that include an orchestra.

Also, on December 5, 1970, the Cooper Organ, named for Harry E. Cooper, former head of the music department, was dedicated. Dr. Cooper came out of retirement to play the dedicatory recital, and Dr. Lynch played as well. Annie Laurie Pomeranz, '41, was a major contributor to the organ fund and a prime mover in encouraging financial support from many

friends and alumnae, including Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Strawbridge; Margaret Anne Thomas, class of 1941; and Mrs. W.T. Brown. Dr.

Lynch calls the quality of the Cooper Organ "excellent" and is pleased that several generations of Meredith music students have caused its 1,840 speaking pipes to swell with magnificent chords very like the "huge billows of sound" to which Washington Irving once thrilled in Westminster Abbey.

Overall, Dr. Lynch is pleased with Jones Hall. "Despite the frustrations," he says, "Jones has been and is a nice place to work." But Dr. Rose's tribute to Meredith, written at the time of the Jones Hall dedication, perhaps captures best the mystique and ambiance of the performances and ceremonies that go on in this great hall. The audience waits expectantly as the curtain parts. A hush falls over the rows upon rows of faculty, students, alumnae. At such moments, in Dr. Rose's words, "it would be an unimaginative and dull heart, indeed, which did not thrill" to the transforming power of music, theater, dance, celebration—to the myriad occasions for pageantry and pomp this auditorium provides.



The soul created the arts wherever they have flourished. It was in his own mind that the artist sought his model. It was an application of his own thought to the thing to be done and the conditions to be observed. And why need we copy the Doric or the Gothic model? Beauty, convenience, grandeur of thought and quaint expression are as near to us as to any, and if the American artist will study with hope and love the precise thing to be done by him, considering the climate, the soil, the length of the day, the wants of the people, the habit and form of the government, he will create a house in which all these will find themselves fitted, and taste and sentiment will be satisfied also.

Insist on yourself. Never imitate.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson
Self-Reliance



Great literary figures have long given words to the artist's impulses, shaping a philosophy and creative ideal with all the precision a painter brings to the last swirl of burnt sienna or cerulean blue on the startling canvas. Emerson's challenge to the American artist reverberates with the freedom and space that are essential to the visual arts. We are to look with our own eyes, shape with our own hands, and define with our own minds and hearts the landscape of a particularly American sensibility. But art is universal as well, and Joseph Conrad expands the boundaries of the artist's responsibility in time and space. He asserts, "And art

itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe." The artist's goal is truth. She is to look at the world unflinchingly, "to find in its forms, in its colors, in its light, in its shadows . . . what is enduring and essential." Even artists with only flashes of greatness are nonetheless obligated to proceed with courage and perseverance through the maelstrom of public taste and opinion, to be the standard-bearers of this "highest kind of justice."

Meredith College has shown remarkable courage and tenacity in its support of and devotion to the visual



Frankie G. Wynn's art gallery



arts. Dr. Craig Greene, head of the art department, says, "It's unusual that a small college would support *one* of the fine arts in such a generous way." The Gaddy-Hamrick Art Center is the embodiment of a strong commitment to a wide range of artistic pursuits. The building was given by the families of two businessmen, F.B. Hamrick and Claude Gaddy, in honor of their long friendship. Mary Lily Gaddy was, in fact, president of the Meredith Alumnae Association at the time of the building's dedication in 1987. In the February 6, 1987 issue of the *Meredith Herald*, Dr. Greene commented, "We want this to be *the* center for women in art." Much of his prophecy has come true. In 1990, there were "roughly" eighty-five art majors, in fine arts studio—including photography, painting, printmaking, ceramics, art history, and drawing; in teacher certification in art; and in graphic design. Dr. Greene says, "It's amazing what happens with the dynamics of being under one roof. We've more than doubled in size."

Prior to the long-awaited construction of the Gaddy-Hamrick Art Center, the art department was scattered over the campus, and a comprehensive, cohesive department was more difficult to maintain. Much of the teaching in the department was done by adjunct professors, but Dr. Greene has altered the proportions.

When he came to Meredith after having served as head of the art department at Chowan College, there were, in addition to the chairman, only two full-time professors and six adjunct professors. Now there are seven full-time professors and only five adjunct professors. Dr. Greene recalls that there were art studios and classrooms in Wainwright and Jones; ceramics classes in the old Faircloth house; darkrooms in Joyner; and print-making, 3-d design, and weaving in the old Bee Hive. In addition, Dr. Greene remembers with considerable nostalgia



and some regret a "wonderful" painting studio on the third floor of Johnson Hall. "It had perfect light," he says, explaining that the north light is the most constant, the south light next in constancy, and the east-west lights most changeable. He liked, too, the wooden floors and the ambience of this now-defunct studio. But gaining a permanent center for the arts was worth the loss of this special studio. After Dr. Greene stepped through the floor of the old Bee Hive—the result, he says, of zealous termites—plans got underway for a new art building.



Though the cost of the art building exceeded the budget by more than 750,000 dollars, the space was nonetheless inadequate. The new tenants have worked diligently and creatively to provide the maximum space for art students, even to the point of storing necessary equipment and materials in overhead lofts. Dr. Greene laughs that the photography studio has been redesigned "about fifty times," but Nona Short, who teaches photography, ups the number to five-hundred times. The result of these creative solutions to the problem of limited space has been favorable. Dr. Greene says of the frequently redesigned photography studio, "There's not another photography facility

like it in the Southeast." He credits Ms. Short with much of the improvement in design and economy in the studio, and he says of her considerable talent, "She's one of the best photographers in the state."

Overall, the building meets the needs of the department very well. There are facilities for the beginning, intermediate, and advanced students, and, according to a 1987 article in the *Meredith Herald*, the Gaddy-Hamrick Art Center is "personalized to fit the conceptual and functional needs of the instructor." The individual is primary, both in the attention given to her working space and in the development of her particular talent. Dr. Greene embraces a philosophy that includes, for beginners, a "very strong and traditional academic foundation" and, for the intermediate and advanced students, an increasing emphasis on creativity and experimentation. "We seek a balance," he says, and Meredith's art majors seem to thrive on this rational approach to the old and the new, emerging with degrees that earn the respect of employers. "Our students are extremely good, and even sought after," says Dr. Greene. Though there are no qualifications upon entry, each graphic design student must produce a substantial portfolio, and studio fine-arts students must prepare an exhibit of their works.





And this center is wonderfully designed for exhibitions. The Frankie G. Weems art gallery provides functional space for displaying the works of Meredith art students as well as artists with established reputations in the community, state, and beyond. A "clean room" is used only to assemble exhibition material, and the gallery itself has high ceilings and moveable walls onto which works are attached with Velcro. The gallery is named for the wife of President John Weems, in "recognition of her interest in and support of the visual and performing arts at Meredith and in the greater Raleigh community." Mrs. Weems was a longtime member of the Raleigh Fine Arts Society and served as its president. Dr. Greene is emphatic in his praise of Mrs. Weems. He says, "Frankie Weems was one of my greatest supporters. Her influence made this building possible." And he adds, "I miss her very much." Dr. Greene hopes that the creation of a Friend of the Gallery will go far in encouraging among members greater attendance and support for the gallery, desire in keeping with the devotion Frankie Weems brought to artistic endeavors.

In addition to encouraging the discipline and development of Meredith art students, the department also invites prominent artists to spend a day, week, or even a month on campus, bringing to art students a variety of fresh artistic insights and instruction. Internationally renowned New York artist Dorothy Gillespie was invited to spend some time on the campus and created two fanciful sculptures, one in the Faw Garden behind the music building and another inside the Gaddy-Hamrick Art Center. The latter is, in Dr. Greene's words, a "festive" work in painted aluminum of "ribbons that seem to dance on the wall." And in 1988,

Lucy Yao came from Beijing to teach traditional Chinese flower painting, returning to China on the very day students occupied Tianenmen Square. These visiting artists show the eclectic range of tastes and experiences available to Meredith students. "We've also had a realist and a surrealist," Dr. Greene laughs.

Dr. Greene's special artistic contribution to the celebration of Meredith's Centennial is a series of five etchings, "rich in detail" and depicting various campus scenes. "These are not just etchings of buildings. They are landscapes, with a great deal of human activity," Dr. Greene says. The plates are prepared by hand and require extreme patience and precision as well as artistic talent. Half of the money earned from the sale of these etchings will be used for a scholarship endowment for a re-entry art student. Such a project, however, is in keeping with Dr. Greene's delight and pride in his work and in Meredith College. He says, "It's a pleasure to get up in the morning and come to work." He hopes some day to see a graduate program established for art students at Meredith, but he is content for the moment. The self-reliance that inspired Emerson's stirring call for independent action, free spirits, raw courage, and unique American style is the same impulse that drives the artist. As Virginia Woolf wrote in "A Room of One's Own," "There must be freedom and there must be peace. Not a wheel must grate, not a light glimmer." Those are the essential conditions of great art, and that freedom must be protected at any cost. It is the soul's secret ardor, and it belongs only to the brave individual who dares to claim its power and to the society that dares to safeguard its vitality.



Portrait of Ida Poteat, professor of art, 1899-1940



It was a nice house. It was in a place where the days would go by and surprise anyone that they were over. The lamplight and the firelight would shine out the door after dark, over the still and breathing country, lighting the roses and the bottle trees, and all was quiet there.

— Eudora Welty
Livvie



When old Solomon carries his young bride Livvie “away up on the Old Natchez Trace into the deep country,” he brings her to a house far better than any she has ever known. The house has three rooms and is full of furniture, including an organ, a tall scrolled rocker, a double settee, and a bright iron bed. The walls are covered with holly paper and decorated with green palmettos; yellowed photographs of Solomon’s family are propped on the mantel-shelf, atop “fresh newspaper cut with fancy borders.” The dirt yard is swept in perfect circles, and not a blade of grass disturbs its perfect surface. Rose bushes, peach trees, and a pomegranate flourish outside. A shining green

or blue bottle is tied to every branch of the crape-myrtle trees, guaranteed to entrap evil spirits and keep them from entering the house. But the house, fine and sparkling and safe as it is, oppresses young Livvie. Nobody comes and goes there—“nobody, nobody at all, not even a white person.” The silence is palpable. Nothing stirs except the spring breezes through the white lace curtains. Solomon knows how to build a house, but he has no idea of how to make a home.

The landscape of all literature is dotted with houses of every kind, from Peter’s pumpkin shell to Wordsworth’s Dove Cottage, from Scarlett O’Hara’s Tara to Thoreau’s cabin at Walden Pond. And what



Massey House



Massey House (interior)



President John E. Weems with Chelsea

applies to art and life applies equally to houses, of whatever sort. Flannery O'Connor says the artist is bounded only by what he or she can make live. Similarly, the simplest or most elegant abode is bounded not by walls or circumstance or various adornments but by what the residents can make live within those walls, within that particular destiny. The architect creates blueprints. The builder gives reality and solidity to the sketched plans. But only the humans residing in the finished structure can give it life, breath, feeling.

In the first year and a half after the completion of the Massey House—Meredith College's first on-campus, presidential residence—over 100,000 visitors passed through its welcoming doors. Everybody came and went, admiring the furnishings, remarking on the size of the rooms and the house's imposing situation at the rise of the hill. John Edgar Weems, the sixth president of Meredith and the first to live in this fine house, speaks with warmth, humor, and enthusiasm of the years during which his family has called this house a home. Though the rooms are large and, at least in certain public areas of the house, quite formal, Dr. Weems appreciates the comfort of his accommodations,

the graceful traffic flow for entertaining, the beauty of the sunroom, the quietude of its location within a dappled wood on the back corner of the Meredith campus. "It's not a house you have to tiptoe through," he says. "It's beautiful over there. I'm delighted." He and his wife, Frankie G. Weems, moved into the just-completed house in 1972, with their three children—John, then a senior in high school; David, a seventh grader; and Nancy, a fifth grader. Before the Massey House was built, Meredith College had housed its presidents off campus—Carlyle Campbell in a stone house on Furches Street, and Bruce Heilman in a house on Glen Eden Drive. Dr. Heilman resigned to become president of the University of Richmond in 1971, and, in January 1972, President Weems assumed office, after having served as a vice president for finance and administration at Middle Tennessee State University.

The Massey House was dedicated on September 22, 1972, and named in honor of Luther Malcus Massey and Vivian Dawson Massey, "in recognition of their generous investments and dedicated service to Meredith College." Dr. Massey, a Zebulon dentist, had been instrumental in acquiring the presidential home

on Glen Eden Drive before becoming involved in the construction of this house on campus. Cited as an outstanding alumnus of Wake Forest University, Dr. Massey had served as a Meredith trustee for more than twenty years and was chairman of the board when Dr. Heilman became president.

At the time of the dedication, a booklet marked the ceremony, informing the audience of the names of each room as well as providing a photograph of the interior furnishings, for which Kay Covington Lambeth, '38, was responsible. Dr. Weems says that folks often ask how big the house is, imagining from its imposing exterior that it must have thirty or forty rooms. In fact, there are only about thirteen rooms, with three bedrooms upstairs, one bedroom downstairs, and the typical array of rooms common to most houses: a living room, dining room, kitchen, front hall, den, and basement room for informal parties or meetings. The only rooms that are not, in Dr. Weems' view, "typical" are the Lawrence Library, given in memory of Sarah Evelyn Honeycutt Lawrence and Sexton Lawrence; and the Turner study, given in honor of Dr. J. Clyde Turner. Dr. Weems particularly enjoys the fact

that in only one room is it necessary to leave by the same door one enters. "I never feel hemmed in," he says. Asked which are his favorite rooms, he defers to his wife's preference: "Without question, the sunroom was Frankie's favorite room. She loved nature." And he comments on the mood and atmosphere of the rooms as well. "The library looks like a movie set," he says. "It will calm you down. The sunroom will buoy you up."

Nearly all the rooms in the Massey House were named for a number of staunch Meredith supporters, builders, and contributors: the Susan Harris Burton Room, presented in loving memory by Mr. and Mrs. William M. Burton and family; the Davidson Room, in appreciation for James A. Davidson's services as construction consultant; the Johnson Room, in memory of Margaret Louise Johnson, a friend of Meredith College; the Jones room, in honor of Christina B. Jones and Seby B. Jones, who served as member and chairman of the Board of Trustees and was the general contractor for the construction of the Massey House; the Lambeth Room, in honor of Kay Covington Lambeth, the decorator of the residence; the Sharpe Room, in honor of





Lawrence Library

Homer Sharpe, a friend of Meredith College; the Vaughan Room, in honor of J. W. and Clara Vaughan, friends of Meredith College; the Vick Room, in honor of William C. Vick, friend of Meredith College; the Weems Room, in honor of John E. and Frankie G. Weems; the Williams Room, in honor of Jerry and Claude B. Williams, who served as a trustee and associate of Meredith College; and the aforementioned Lawrence Library and Turner Study.

Only one room—the Burton Room—has been re-decorated since the Weems family has inhabited the house. This area, designated for student activities, has never been used for that purpose, according to Dr. Weems. However, occasional meetings or special gatherings are held in this room, as is the case with other rooms in the house. The Burton Room is now decorated in black and gray, and Dr. Weems calls it “the prettiest room in Raleigh.” But all else in the comfortably furnished house has remained much the same, with the exception of some re-upholstering necessary in the seating area because, according to President Weems,

the sunlight is quite hard on the furniture. And Dr. Weems has added a personal touch of his own—moving out one bed in an upstairs room and installing his own computer, which is one of his passions.

The decor is comfortable, classic, with only a touch of the extreme formality typical in homes used for official purposes. So lovely is the house that it was, a couple of years after its completion, selected to be on the annual garden tour of Raleigh. Dr. Weems laughs, recalling the bizarre chain of events that resulted from that agreement. There were six houses on the garden tour that year, all of them in the neighborhood bordering Lassiter Mill Road, except, of course, for the Massey House on the Meredith Campus. Dr. Weems’ wife, Frankie, had come back from a trip to the beach a day or two early, and found a guard sitting on the front porch with a gun across his lap. All the five houses on the garden tour in the Lassiter-Mill area had been robbed, and only the Massey House remained on the robbers’ hit list. Ironically, the handsome publication distributed at the dedication ceremony, complete with

photographs of the rooms and their expensive contents, had gotten into the hands of the criminals. "We had, in effect, given the robbers a handbook for committing the perfect crime," President Weems recalls with great amusement.

The rather isolated location of the Massey House has caused some other odd incidents. Once the police knocked on the front door to report that a bear was loose in the woods outside the house. Eight or ten policemen were trekking through the yard, trying to trap the bear. "Eventually, they caught the bear over in Pullen Park," President Weems says, adding that the bear must have crossed through the Meredith campus and lumbered down the railroad tracks to the park. Another time, a badly injured man came to the front door. Still very likely dazed from a traffic accident on the beltline, the man, who said he was a longshoreman, wandered down to Wade Avenue, somehow scaling the extremely high fence and sliding down to the Massey House, instead of going up on Ridge Road. Periodically, President Weems says that "the police will come to the door to report that there's an escaped convict loose in the woods." The gates automatically lock at precisely eleven o'clock at night. "If people are driving through at that time, they get trapped, and then I have to go down and let them through the gates"—a circumstance that could prove embarrassing to students and their dates who are taking the back road home. President Weems is good natured about the risks of living in a dark wood so far from the central buildings on campus. He likes the privacy, but he adds, "Living there has made for some interesting experiences."

Obviously, this public house has an invaluable private dimension as well. Eleanor Roosevelt, in her book *This I Remember*, vividly records the personal habits of the inhabitants of the White House, the complications of housekeeping, the demands of entertaining, the periodic spells of redecorating, the difficulties of training the staff and keeping the house running smoothly. She remembers President Franklin D. Roosevelt's preference for breakfast in bed, her habit of stopping by his room for a brief morning greeting, the noise and rambunctiousness of numerous grandchildren, the out-of-pocket expenses the first family endured, the demands of entertaining. But as with many people who live in highly public places, she is resigned, philosophical, never forgetting her obligation to the throngs of visitors. She writes, "I soon discovered that, particularly to people from out of town, the White House has a very deep significance. I was only a symbol. . . ."

Certainly, the Massey House is both an embodiment of Meredith's symbolic importance as a place of strong tradition and cordiality, but it is, as the White House comes to be for all its residents, a real home—full of life, humor, conflict, crises, personal quirks, and private pleasures. The most attractive, inviting house is a stifling prison if nobody comes and goes, nobody at all. At the Massey House, the president and his family keep the tradition of hospitality alive, and with it, an abiding sense that this dwelling is also a refuge where an individual family is given room to breathe and live.



Mr. Bulstrode's power was not due simply to his being a country banker who knew the financial secrets of most traders in the town and could touch the springs of their credit; it was fortified by a beneficence that was at once ready and severe—ready to confer obligations and severe in watching the result.

— George Eliot
Middlemarch

The business of America is business.

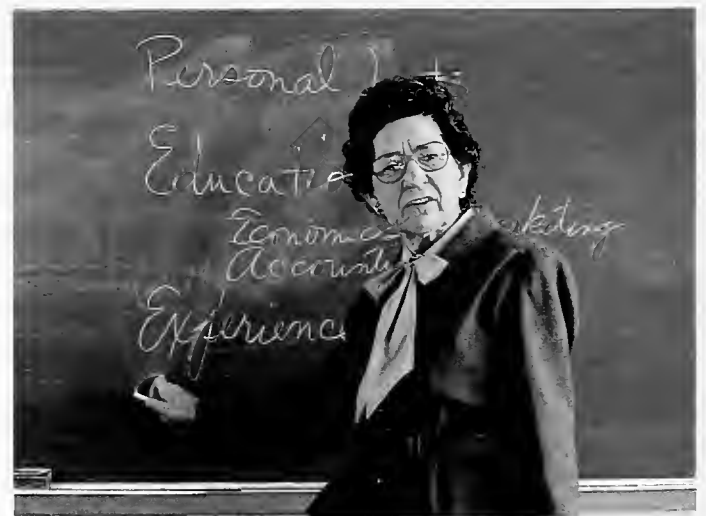
— Calvin Coolidge



In George Eliot's densely detailed nineteenth century novel, the characters wrestle with the problems of being and remaining human in an inexorably advancing modern world. The subtitle of the work—*A Study of Provincial Life*—is clearly ironic, at least in one sense. The problems of *Middlemarch* are hardly "provincial." They are the problems of urban society. No longer can the small town or the green countryside imagine itself exempt from the ethical, technological, scientific, spiritual, economic, and philosophical crises and complications of life in any grand metropolis, whether London or New York or Moscow. In the village of Middlemarch, all the elements of tradition collide with the pressures of progress. The vicar, the banker, the doctor, the scholar, the housewife, the shopkeeper, the aristocrat, and the farmer must reconcile their fixed beliefs and prejudices with a society that refuses to wait, refuses to stand still. In another sense, the subtitle is deadly earnest. *Middlemarch* is, indeed, a "study"—every bit as analytical and cruelly detailed as a banker's ledger, a physician's case study.

Meredith College—seat of revered tradition, repository of timeless wisdom, bucolic setting of Wordsworthian scope and design—is likewise a savvy and bustling world of urbane sophistication, of fearless progress. The founders of the original Baptist Female University were wise in wishing for their "daughters" an education of high quality and serious purpose. And "business" was not omitted from the earliest curriculum of this institution. Even in 1899, Miss Hattie Farrior was listed in the *First Annual Announcement of the Baptist Female University* as teaching "Stenography, Typewriting, and Bookkeeping."

But the founders surely did not reckon with the complications and crises of being a woman in the twentieth century. The women of earlier eras—with the exception perhaps of shrewd businesswomen like the Wife of Bath in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, or canny manipulators like Becky Sharp in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*—were often groomed and educated for ornamental or, in the modern vernacular, "supportive" roles. These women were not expected to function, even when safely married, as if their welfare depended on themselves alone. Even the fiercely independent Wife of Bath is looking for her sixth husband—though her search is a matter of personal preference, not need. Women might control the family budget, count the family pennies, keep the family coffers safely under lock and key. But they did not build the family fortune. They were managers, not magnates; caretakers, not captains of industry. If they had vast fortunes, they "earned" them by default,



Lois Frazier, former head of the Department of Business and Economics



perhaps finding themselves wealthy in the absence of legitimate male heirs or unexpectedly widowed. Even if women excelled in particular fields such as literature, they did so under cover of male pseudonyms, an obvious case in point being Mary Ann Evans, whose pen name was George Eliot. And of course the famous Bronte sisters—Charlotte, Emily, and Ann—adopted the names of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell to disguise their genders.

Though Meredith College has, from its inception, trained and educated women in the skills of office work and bookkeeping, only in the last two decades has this institution forthrightly claimed for women full status in the traditionally male-dominated worlds of finance and computer technology. Dr. Knight says, "Dr. Campbell put business back in the curriculum." The groundbreaking of the Shearon Harris Building for Business Administration on September 25, 1981, offered proof that Meredith trustees and administrators were ready to accept the call for new freedom and choice for women, a movement that had begun in the late sixties and early seventies. Shearon Harris, a Meredith trustee for ten years and chairman of the

board for four years, was himself a businessperson—the chief executive officer, president, and chairman of the board of Carolina Power and Light. The building, located west of Joyner and south of the Carlyle Campbell Library, gave a sense of completion and fullness to the professional and educational opportunities for women at Meredith. Around the library, the hub of all learning, were now ranged the humanities building, the science building, and the business building.

Constructed in 1982 at a cost of 1.3 million dollars, the Harris building was and is a testament to the changing directions in women's lives and choices. The building houses the Departments of Business Administration and Economics, Mathematics, and Computer Science. Lois Frazier, then head of the Department of Business and Economics and the first Wainwright Professor of Business and Economics, said of the new building that it had a feeling of "brightness and airiness." She added, "It's not the typical school house green." Perhaps the bold design and colors underscored the bold choices Meredith was then making about the direction and emphasis of women's voca-



tions and avocations. Dr. Frazier was quoted in a 1982 issue of the *Twig* as saying, "Business is a viable, changing, dynamic field," reminding naysayers and doubters that Meredith had to progress even as it adhered to a rigorous commitment to the liberal arts. In 1982, there were two-hundred business majors, and 1,226 students at Meredith were enrolled in some sort of business course. According to Donald Spanton, head of the department since 1986, each year the department graduates an average of 140 to 160 women with B.S. degrees in Business Administration; and, in the spring of 1990, there were 192 graduate students enrolled in the M.B.A. graduate program. The department operates at nearly maximum capacity and is now the largest department on campus. The undergraduate students have a choice among four concentrations: accounting, economics, marketing, and management. "Marketing," he says, "is very much the 'in' thing. Office administration has been dropped from the curriculum." He adds, "We no longer train secretaries."

In an issue of the *Twig*, February 13, 1984, the headline read, "New Computer Opportunities Open to Meredith Students." Certainly the headline was more than prophetic of what has happened at Meredith.

Ms. Ruth Balla came to Meredith in 1987 as an instructor in computer science and became, in 1988, Director of Academic Computing—a newly created position. She says, "It's a great time to be in education because Meredith is truly integrating computer use into every field. It's very exciting." The Harris Building contains both a computer laboratory and a computer classroom, which faculty members can reserve for classroom instruction. "Every student at Meredith will have exposure to a computer," says Ms. Balla, thanks to the English department requirement that all students in English 111, the freshman-level composition course, be introduced to computers. Course work—papers, tests, grading—is routinely done on faculty and student computers. "Satellite labs are spread across the campus," Ms. Balla says. In her job as Director of Academic Computing, Ms. Balla is the systems manager. She does all the system maintenance for computers used by students, faculty, and faculty secretaries, as well as offering non-credit classes to the faculty and staff.

Ms. Balla agrees that computers have revolutionized education. Computers are used for graphics by the art department, for statistics in sociology, for interior design in home economics, for nutritional analysis in physical education, and for synthesized music in the music department. Obviously pleased with the variety and scope of computer use in all departments and majors, Ms. Balla says, "We really do all these things on campus." In the Harris Building, for example, "one classroom has a computer with four large monitors attached, making it possible for math professors to reproduce graphs electronically rather than drawing the graphs on the board."





Certainly, the notion that the worlds of business, math, economics, and computer science could attract record numbers of interested females was unsettling to some, unrealistic to others. Some fears very likely existed that women would not pursue such fields with the diligence, enthusiasm, and capability alleged to be more natural and suitable to men. But the fears have proved unfounded. Students at Meredith are operating computers, experimenting with advanced technologies, and choosing careers in business and computer science with all the analytical calm George Eliot once gave to the construction of her novel *Middlemarch*. Meredith women are neither intimidated by the machinery of the twentieth century nor self-effacing and shy about their abilities to adapt to the changing demands of technology and education both in and out of the classroom. They are daring to claim for themselves direct control over their personal and professional "fortunes," in every sense of that potent, alluring word. As Dr. Spanton suggested, Meredith is educating businesswomen, not training secretaries.

And these women have the equipment and the expertise to pursue their vocations and avocations with the singleminded confidence and ease of clever entrepreneurs and seasoned corporate executives.



Still I admit that Plato's world was not ours, that his scorn of trade and handicraft is fantastic, that he had no conception of a great industrial community such as that of the United States, and that such a community must and will shape its education to suit its own needs. If the usual education handed down to it from the past does not suit it, it will certainly before long drop this and try another.

— Matthew Arnold
Literature and Science



Teaching is not and never has been a matter, simply, of giving lectures and grading papers. To be an educator is also to accept the responsibility of constantly reexamining and redefining what the word “education” means. What are its boundaries? Where is the emphasis properly to be placed from age to age? How does it reflect changes in the culture? Where does it begin and end? Whom does it serve? These are good questions, reasonable questions, and the asking of them inevitably leads to controversy, compromise,

and change. Education is—like language, morals, and people—organic. Never static and tidy, it flows through, in, and around society, giving life and breath to all the activities and pursuits of humankind.

Meredith College has seldom for long been able to avoid facing serious questions about its educational purposes. During the last hundred years, administrators, faculty, and trustees have thoughtfully, and sometimes vehemently, debated the scope and substance of what it could offer women in terms of what women have needed in particular times and places. Meredith has even, at times, been pushed by economic necessity or community expectations, to redefine what it means to be a college. Allen Burris, Dean of the College, takes a sane, pragmatic position with regard to such disputes about the purposes of education in general and of colleges in particular. He says of Meredith’s history as an institution of higher learning: “Vocational concerns have been around all along.” Even when Meredith was called the Baptist Female University, this institution boldly addressed and reconciled the so-called conflict between the commitment to liberal arts education and the very real need for specific, practical training in particular jobs or careers. From 1902 until 1911, Meredith offered the master’s degree, as well as career-oriented education.

Debates about Meredith’s purposes resurfaced in 1983, when a graduate program in business, education, and music was introduced. The concept of offering the master’s degree in these particular fields was welcomed by some and viewed with suspicion by others. Dean Burris recalls that critics of the decision feared an over-emphasis on vocational education and others imagined that such graduate programs would be a drain on the economic and academic resources of





First heads of John E. Weems Graduate School at dinner celebrating the naming of the school, 1989: (from left) David Lynch, Lois Frazier, President Weems, Mary Johnson, and Dean Burris

the college. Those who like their definitions and delineations clear and sharp as Kodak snapshots feared that Meredith was also blurring the distinction between the role of a college versus the role of a university. But the graduate program, according to Dr. Burris, has proved to be a very real asset both to the community-at-large and to Meredith College. The attitude among critics of graduate studies at Meredith has mellowed in recent years. Dean Burris says, "The vocal spirit has changed about the graduate school. It's much more positive now."

The graduate program was first headed by Dr. Clara Bunn, who served as its dean and coordinator beginning in 1983, but in 1988 the program was renamed the John E. Weems Graduate School of Business Administration, Education, and Music. Dean Burris says, "It's fair to say that John Weems took the initiative on the graduate program. It was his vision, his dream." In the catalogue for 1989-1991, President Weems writes, "As the program gains strength and vitality, it will likely attract other departments to the opportunity of offering graduate work to women in the Research Triangle Park area of North Carolina, where Meredith's reputation as a service institution is so well known."

The John E. Weems Graduate School was created in the spirit of adjustment and change Matthew Arnold acknowledges in one of three lectures he delivered in 1883-84 and later published in a work entitled *Discourses in America*. The choices of business, education, and music were based, according to Dean Burris, on an initiative from each department. "We looked for a long reputation of strength and quality," Dean Burris says. Mary Johnson, who became dean of the graduate school in 1990, says the graduate school was created, at least in part, as a "service to the community." She adds, "There was a real need for graduate-level work for women in the community." The success of the gradu-





ate school is evident both in its enrollment levels and in its financial vigor. "There was a strong potential market in education," Dean Burris says. And certainly, the Meredith M.B.A. program has been a resounding success, operating, according to Donald Spanton, head of the Business and Economics Department, at "nearly maximum capacity." Dean Burris predicts that "a number of other master's degree programs will come along."

The graduate school is designed and organized with the student in mind. Dr. Spanton says that all classes for the M.B.A. program, for example, are offered on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, making it possible for women who aspire to management or administrative positions or are already in the work force to pursue this graduate degree without interruption. With its own M.B.A. program, Meredith is certainly competitive with similar programs at Duke University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Campbell University. Dr. Spanton says, "There is no M.B.A. program at State."

Both the Dean of the College and the Dean of the Graduate School agree that the John E. Weems Graduate School has potential for even greater growth and

success. Dean Johnson, who has been Director of Instruction for the Wake County school system and who served as head of the Department of Education at Meredith, is excited about the future of the graduate school. She accepted the position of dean because she looked for "different challenges, different experiences." She hopes to "clarify the mission, goals, and objectives" of the graduate program and "to give identity to the graduate school." Dean Johnson wants the women in this community to know what Meredith has to offer in the way of graduate studies and to take advantage of this convenient, affordable, and high-quality alternative to full-time graduate studies at other academic institutions.

Even Matthew Arnold, who resolutely argued in favor of a strong emphasis on the enduring truths and wisdom offered in the humanities, could not deny or ignore the cultural influences on static concepts of education. He dared to dispute Plato, however gently. And the faculty and administrators at Meredith have challenged and will continue to challenge the accepted or conventional notions about what a college can be and do for its changing population.



1990 graduates of John E. Weems Graduate School



John E. Weems Graduate School Commencement, 1990



O, about flunking my exams,—I shall flunk History & probably Geometry, and I may pass German and possibly Old English. That's the way I stand at present. I'm going to cram some, but darn it, I'm tired. If I flunk 'em all they won't send me home, because two of 'em are Sophomore courses and oh, well, they wouldn't.

God help me in my exams. I haven't opened a book since My Freshman Year.

— Edna St. Vincent Millay
Letters

"Girl," I says, "come help me haul these things down the hill, I'm going to live at the post office."

— Eudora Welty
Why I Live at the P.O.



In a December 1972 issue of the *Twig*, Bill Norton wrote, "For nearly half a century, Meredith students studied in a temporary library, and they used wooden frame buildings for a gymnasium and a student center." Dru Morgan Hinsley doubled, during many of



those years, both as manager of the Bee Hive and as "postmistress" for Meredith, until she asked, as she puts it, that "the burden of handling the mail be lifted from me." Mrs. Hinsley says, "The post office was originally located where Dean Burris' office is, and then it was added to the Bee Hive." But a five-million dollar Meredith College Advancement Program ultimately resulted in the construction of several long-awaited facilities, including two residence halls, a gymnasium, a library, and a dramatically designed and decorated "college center." Originally called the College and Continuing Education Center, the building was dedicated in 1974 and named the Cate Center, in honor of Kemp Shields Cate. The building, which has been renovated numerous times, now houses the college supply store, the 140-seat Kresge Auditorium, counseling offices, student government and publications offices, the college post office, game rooms, lounges, and Le Greenhouse Cafe.

But many years passed before this sleek building with trapezoid-shaped windows and contemporary decor became a haven for students to study and moan, students who might be as hopelessly behind in their studies as the young Edna St. Vincent Millay. The Cate Center, in those early years, was neither as friendly nor as homey as Sister's butter-bean vines and ironing board at the local P.O. in China Grove. At first the students were unwilling to trek down to the Cate Center because it seemed miles farther than the old



Cate Center

and much more convenient Bee Hive. Mrs. Hinsley recalls that the Cate Center seemed to be stuck out in a field on the very edge of the campus complex. "A whole generation of students had to pass through here and graduate before the student center became popular," Mrs. Hinsley says. She recalls that the move from the Bee Hive was a massive effort. "Everybody helped us move in one day, and then we had only two weeks to get the store ready for the students." The new student center had a faculty lounge, but the faculty never used it and so it was eventually converted to a counseling center. Until October of that year, the only facility open and ready for use in the student center was the supply store. The soda fountain was still operating in the Bee Hive. Mrs. Hinsley says, "We liked to have died the first four years we were down there. The students refused to walk that far." She adds, "We suffered. It was the loneliest place in the world." The only attractions at the Cate Center in those early years were the supply store and the post office; otherwise, the students had not much use for it, despite the fancy lounges, television set, snack bar, and vending machines.

Only after the students who remembered the Bee Hive left and a new group came in did the student center catch on. But even as late as 1980, issues of the *Twig* prove that the struggle to make the center appealing to



students was ongoing. In January of 1980, services at the Cate Center were expanded to include the hiring of six student workers for ticket sales and the checking-out of recreational equipment. Macramé courses were offered, a pinball machine was installed, and pool and ping-pong tournaments were held. Apparently these efforts to lure students to the center were unsuccessful because the ping-pong room was converted to a study-career interview room, with four small study rooms, new carpeting, and a day-student room as well. The College Center Association also offered movies, pizza parties, and art exhibits.

Fortunately, time has altered the entrenched habits of earlier generations of students. Now, Mrs. Hinsley



is happy in the Cate Center because it is at last a bustling center of student and faculty activities. She says, "What has helped us so much is the other buildings that have gone up around us." The Gaddy-Hamrick Art Center and the Harris Building are now quite near the Cate Center, and students have long since forgotten the old convenience and accessibility of the Bee Hive. "But I still miss the old Bee Hive," she says. "We don't have the intermingling of faculty and students we used to have." The only time she and others who work in the Cate Center get to meet or chat with the faculty members is when a professor comes down to buy something at the snack bar or at the supply store. Faculty meetings are regularly held in the Kresge Auditorium, but, again, the faculty members don't linger after the meeting.

But the Cate Center is nonetheless an important hub of student activities. When anyone passes through the lounge on the second floor, she is likely to be forced to step over students sprawled on the sofas, chairs, and floors. And the overheard conversations have exactly

the same tone and style of Edna St. Vincent's epistolary laments during her years at Barnard and Vassar. The talk is of papers due, upcoming tests, hard professors, the chances of passing the course or squeezing an A out of what is clearly a B average. And some students are intently studying, whether in groups or alone, cramming for exams just as students have always done in every generation. And of course the path to the P.O. is well worn with the daily progress of students marching in and out the doors of the Cate Center, filled with ardent expectations of letters from faraway boy-friends or packages from home. Some students, perhaps already engaged or "deeply committed," as they put it these days, might as well live at the P.O., so carefully do they monitor their mailboxes. A solitary faculty member sitting on the bench just outside Joyner Hall puffs her cigarette and smiles at the parade of letter-readers passing by. These young women hardly know where their feet are. The students are floating. They have been to the P.O. and are as thoroughly triumphant in their quest for written affirmations of undying love as is Sister in her defiance of mean old Stella Rondo and the rest of her hopelessly unjust family. Like Sister, who, in Eudora Welty's amusing tale, moves to the P.O. as a refuge from her irritating relatives, some young women practically live at the Cate Center, hovering around the television set, re-reading the same sentence from *The Odyssey* in hopeless non-comprehension, and waiting for "the" letter that, in the way of this sometimes cruel world, may or may not be coming.





*And the sight of a white church above thin trees in a city. . .
 Amazes my eyes as though it were the Parthenon.
 Clear, reticent, superbly final,
 With the pillars of its portico refined to a cautious elegance,
 It dominates the weak trees,
 And the shot of its spire
 Is cool and candid,
 Rising into an unresisting sky.*

— Amy Lowell
Meeting-House Hill

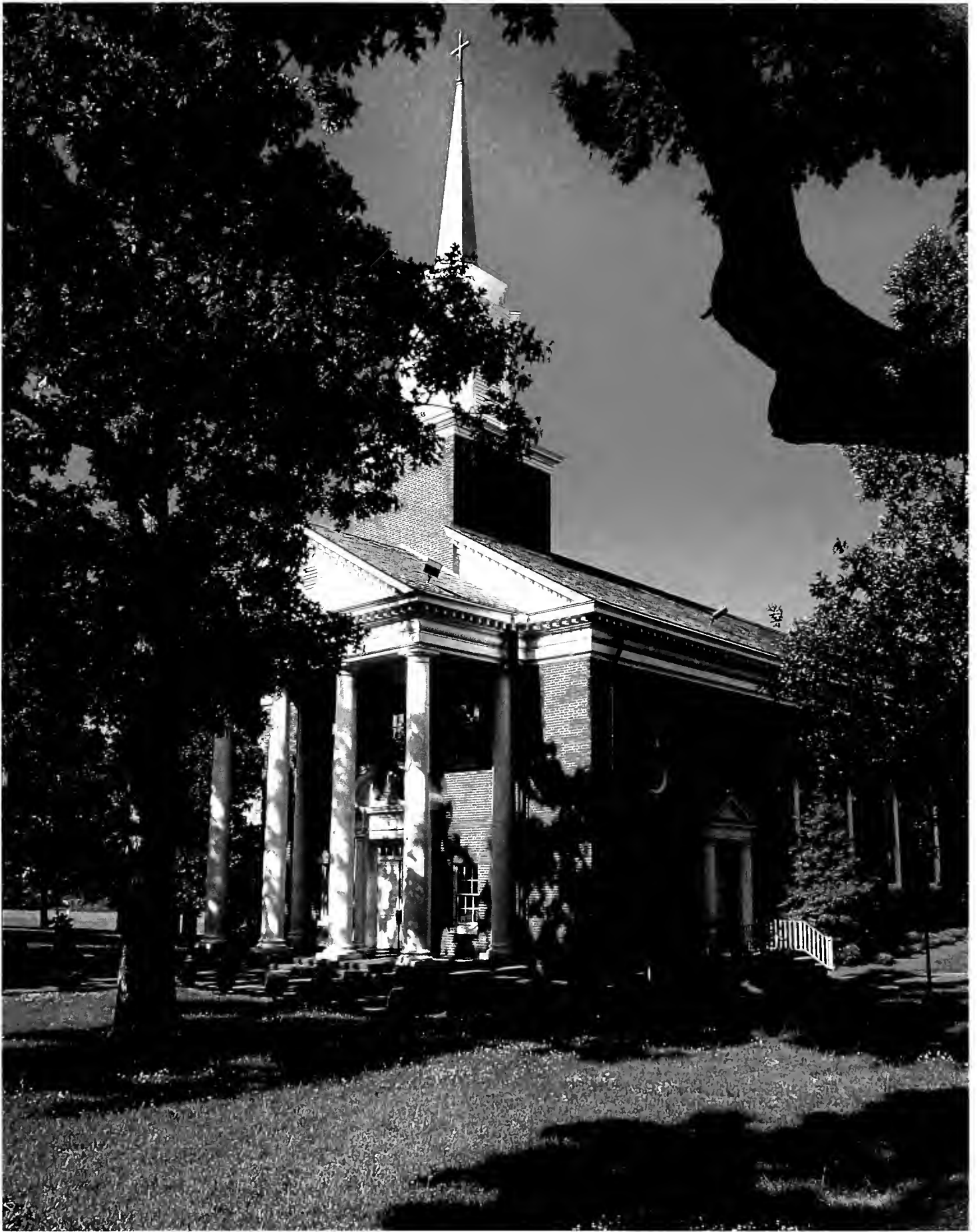


Maudlin sentimentality and hazy mysticism have no place in this poet's vision of a church emphatically and implacably rendering all aspects of nature—even the “unresisting sky”—ephemeral and weak. Lowell has no illusions about where power, strength, and immortality reside. This meeting-house makes even the hill-top “squalid.” The image is apt, even for the chapel at Meredith College. It claims no hill-top, but its carefully chosen site, facing east toward the double drive leading into the campus, and its traditional architectural design reflect an attitude and emphasis that is, if not rigid, then certainly weighty and enduring. Alumnae who vigorously applied their considerable energies and opinions to the design and placement of this chapel were not given to trendy approaches and watered-down theologies. Referring to the adamant stance taken by the alumnae, Carolyn Robinson gently hinted at the architectural deadlock in a 1981 issue of *Meredith* magazine: “In fact, it may be safe to say that no other structure on campus has elicited so much interest and so many deeply felt and openly expressed opinions.” And campus minister Sam Carothers said of the debate, “Everybody was surveyed from the custodian to the president.” The alumnae wanted a church that looked like a church—a church that would be the figurative symbol of a measured orthodoxy, of an abiding faith.

Of course, Christ's heretical stance on the relative importance of mere structures—He had little patience with the cornerstones and foundations of mighty temples—is likewise evident in Meredith's history. Oddly, among the last of the imposing buildings to be erected on Meredith College's campus in its first cen-

tury was the Christina and Seby Jones Chapel. Not until September of 1982 was the chapel dedicated, providing for the first time since the move to the Hillsborough Street site fifty-five years earlier a tangible structure for worship, meditation, prayer, and spiritual regeneration. One might say that Meredith's priorities were skewed, but a better explanation can be found in Meredith College's sound belief in Christ's emphasis on private and inner spirituality, not public and external trappings. But though Christ disdained showy displays and massive edifices of hypocrisy, it nonetheless became clear to the class of 1928 that a chapel was long overdue. After all, Meredith had been founded on “strictly religious principles,” according to Thomas Meredith's resolution presented to the Convention in 1838. But even more important to the growth and scope of the spiritual life of the campus, this institution was to be “as far as possible, free from sectarian influences.” Bigotry and narrow-mindedness would have no place in this chapel, which would serve the spiritual needs of *all* the Meredith faculty, students, and staff. Thus, in 1978, the class of 1928, gathering for its fiftieth reunion, set in motion plans for the funding of a campus chapel. In these 70-year-old women, President John Weems met formidable insistentcies and expectations, and he graciously and immediately gave his support to their effort.

Every financial and aesthetic obstacle was eventually faced and overcome, and the new chapel became a spiritual center for the campus within three years and four months of the date of the launching of the fund-raising effort. The result of these years of struggle and debate is not evident in the placid, dignified



Jones Chapel



structure that now graces the front drive at Meredith. The chapel became much more than the modest facility originally intended. It contains offices for the campus minister and the secretary/receptionist; a commons room; a reading room; a visiting speaker's office; a bride's room; and a kitchen. The chapel itself seats 450 people and is used for services, weddings, and other church-related activities. Women wishing to be married in the chapel get a discount if they have official Meredith ties. So popular is the chapel as a setting for weddings that couples often book the place a year in advance. Here, Meredith students gather for Wednesday worship, special lectures, a Moravian Love Feast, and organ and choral performances. Dr. David Lynch, who worked with the Andover Organ Company in designing the Estelle Johnson Memorial Organ, calls Jones Chapel "the best performance hall" in the Raleigh area, though the acoustics, according to one mildly disgruntled faculty member, are not good for listening to speakers. He praises as well the cooperation he enjoyed in working with architect Carter Williams to perfect the acoustics, an excellent compensation for the lamentable acoustics in the Jones auditorium. Dr. Lynch, head of the Department of Music,

Speech, and Theatre, gives private organ instruction in the chapel as well. He is relieved that the overburdened performance schedule in Jones auditorium has been considerably eased by the building of the chapel.

Naturally, the chapel has served to focus disparate elements of religious activities on campus, but not without some controversy and debate. Sam Carothers, who majored in political science at Western Carolina (very useful, he says, in these politically volatile days of religious conflict) and received a Master of Divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, is the current campus minister. He came to Meredith just as the chapel was being completed, succeeding former campus minister Larry Williams. Asked if Meredith has ever had a female campus minister, the Rev. Sam Carothers has to confess, somewhat sheepishly perhaps, that no female has ever held this position. The first official, full-time campus minister was named in the sixties, and prior to that time, John Lewis, a member of the religion department before taking the position of senior minister at First Baptist Church, served as advisor to the now-defunct Baptist Student Union and as part-time campus minister. The students themselves were anxious to replace the B.S.U. with a new campus organization—the Meredith Christian Association—which would be, in Sam Carothers' words, "more inclusive" and interdenominational. In fact, the preamble to the M.C.A.'s constitution cites as one of its purposes that this organization wishes "to encourage each student in appreciation of her particular denominational heritage." And those who hold religious beliefs not expressly "Christian" are likewise encouraged to participate in religious activities on campus. Such changes reflect a healthier, more tolerant attitude toward the diversity within Meredith's student body.

But much as the new chapel has been admired, used, and loved, its function has not escaped criticism. Some students have called it a "dust collector" and urged that it be used for regular Sunday services as well as occasional campus events. Mr. Carothers disagrees. He says, "That comes up about every two or three years. Philosophically, I would rather students be in a 'real' church. I worry about the artificial atmosphere." He believes that the homogeneity of "membership" in a campus church consisting primarily of female college students would be potentially harmful to the





spiritual lives of those students, insisting that Meredith students need strong ties to neighborhood churches with members of all ages.

Of course, some might assume that the campus minister's duties should include the preparation of weekly Sunday sermons and services, but Mr. Carothers' job description does not leave much room for such an additional load of Sunday responsibilities. In addition to serving as advisor to the Meredith Christian Association, he hosts groups of visiting clergy and theologians, is responsible for the spiritual development of faculty and students, plans lectures, conducts worship services, serves as a liaison between the campus and the community, and handles matters of urgency or import with the Baptist State Convention. Often he is invited to speak to local groups, both in churches and in civic organizations.

In the last several years, the chapel has been a useful adjunct to both sacred and secular activities on cam-

pus. The commons room, well appointed and exceedingly comfortable, has been the setting for literary events sponsored by the Colton English Club, and the sanctuary has proved an invaluable addition to the space available to the music department for performances. The chapel fulfills the wishes of the alumnae who fought for its "cool and candid" spire and its "portico refined to a cautious elegance." But it has also been a vital part of an eclectic array of campus events, from incisive intellectual debate on the ethics of the death penalty to impassioned readings and insightful discussion of Browning's poetry by one of Browning's most ardent advocates, Professor Ione Kemp Knight. Even a committee meeting seems to go unusually smoothly here, perhaps because the spirit of the place soothes frayed nerves and transforms petty, personal grievances into genuinely universal impulses toward truth, justice, mercy, and love.



S

*Just as my fingers on these keys
Make music, so the self-same sounds
On my spirit make a music, too.*

— Wallace Stevens
Peter Quince at the Clavier



Only a poet like Wallace Stevens could know that music is “feeling, then, not sound”—a pulsing vibration of the soul, not some technical exercise of the mind or hand. Even in the days of Meredith’s beginnings as the Baptist Female University, faculty and students alike felt the charms and passions of music. As early as 1902, Wade R. Brown, who studied in Germany and at the New England Conservatory, ably directed the School of Music. Violin, piano, music theory, voice, and organ were among the courses offered, and audiences enjoyed frequent recitals and concerts on the old campus. The University also hosted several illustrious visitors, among them the New York Symphony Or-

chestra, which performed twice, and the Pittsburgh Festival Orchestra, which, in 1908, gave the first performance in North Carolina of Handel’s *Messiah*.

In fact, according to Professor Mary Lynch Johnson, the music department far outstripped the “literary” disciplines in numbers of students and popularity. In 1908, President Richard T. Vann expressed some anxiety that the “excellent school of music” would become “so noted and so popular” that the “work done in arts and sciences” would be “overshadowed.” But though attention was emphatically directed toward other disciplines, especially literature, the music department continued to thrive throughout the ensuing years,



Hammer Music Building



and the music faculty proved to be in "wide demand in Raleigh and elsewhere as recitalists and directors of music in churches." In 1938, students could earn a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in music, and in 1971, the Bachelor of Music degree was first offered. The B.A. in music was described as "a non-professional, non-performance degree," whereas the Bachelor of Music degree offered a major in "either Music Education or Applied Music" and was intended to "produce competent, practical musicians . . . well versed in the liberal arts."

But despite the music's popularity among students, a music building was yet to be built. On Founders' Day in 1977, however, the Harriet Mardre Wainwright Music Building was dedicated, approximately one month after the dedication of the Clara Carswell Concert Hall. The building was made possible by a gift from a Meredith alumna—Harriet Mardre Wainwright's bequest being, according to President John Weems, "the largest gift from a family or individual in the history of the College"; and the concert hall was made possible by a gift of \$100,000 from Mrs. Guy T. Carswell, thus initiating a fund-raising drive for the long-awaited facility. At the dedication of the

Wainwright Building, Harriet Wainwright's husband, Irving Hudgins Wainwright, said, "Harriet came to the conclusion that by helping her college, which had meant so much to her, she would provide a means through which those receiving knowledge could benefit." Mrs. Wainwright, who had graduated from Meredith in 1932, had earned her M.A. in social work at what is now Virginia Commonwealth University.

The Wainwright Building is located on the east side of the campus, overlooking the lake and the McIver Amphitheater. The two-story brick building contains twenty-two teaching studios, eight practice rooms,



three classrooms, a music library, and, of course, the Carver Music Hall, which seats 175 people. According to Anne Strickland, writing in the spring 1997 issue of *Meredith*, the Hall is in "constant use by Meredith students and faculty members" and is admired "by visitors throughout the area as an outstanding setting for musical performances." She added, "Under the guidance of David Lynch, chairman, the department of music has acquired an outstanding and talented faculty."

Dr. Lynch, who studied in Salzburg and Paris and earned his D.M.A. from the Eastman School of Music, is still passionate about music at Meredith, even after being department head for over twenty years. "I feel so committed to this place," he says. In the years since he first was appointed chair of the Department of Music, Speech, and Theatre, he has seen the addition of a graduate school, which offers a Master of Music degree and which included, in 1991, approximately twenty-five students. He applauds the combining of speech and theatre with music, saying, "We work closely with them. We have a congenial relationship."



But though the department has grown and changed, with ten full-time faculty members and approximately 35 adjunct faculty, he says, "There's still a lot of tradition. We still offer the same degrees in the same disciplines. And the building is pretty much the same." Because the faculty has grown, Dr. Lynch has had to turn some practice rooms into teaching studios. Music students can study voice, piano, organ, violin, flute,





Meredith students performing in 1963

cello, double bass, trumpet, clarinet, and even guitar. "Actually," says Dr. Lynch, "we teach quite a lot of guitar." The emphasis remains on classical music, but Dr. Lynch says that he would welcome more instruction in jazz and other kinds of music if the necessary staff were available. The biggest area in the department is music education, and such students often study folk music to be used in the classrooms.

The days of anxiety and concern about large numbers of students pursuing a music curriculum are over, however. Dr. Lynch says, "The number of music majors has decreased nationwide in the last fifteen years." In 1977, there were 130 music majors, and in 1991 there were 100. But Dr. Lynch says, "We've been lucky at Meredith. A lot of places have had to phase out their music majors. And the graduate school has certainly helped us."

Of the Harriet Mardre Wainwright Building, Dr. Lynch says, "The building has served us well. We just wish there were a little bit more of it at times." But never mind. Music is about feelings and souls, as Wallace Stevens points out—not about buildings and bodies and career trends. When faculty, students, and staff strike out around the campus for a bit of fresh air and fitness, the music floats from the doors and windows of the Wainwright Building, reminding those who care to listen of the soul's true home. In the background, the conversations of the birds, the wind in the pines, and the dull roar of cars across the meadow mingle with the notes and melodies of some Meredith student in her practice room. And we know what we have always known about songs and spirits—that they never die, that they endure forever in the secret temple of the soul.



*I spun, I wove, I kept the house, I nursed the sick,
I made the garden, and for holiday
Rambled over the fields where sang the larks,
And by Spoon River gathering many a shell,
And many a flower and medicinal weed—
Shouting to the wooded hills, singing to the green valleys.
At ninety-six, I had lived long enough, that is all,
And passed to a sweet repose.*

— Edwin Arlington Robinson
Lucinda Matlock



For centuries, women have spun, woven, swept, nursed, gardened, and cooked in the narrow confines of what was deemed appropriate and necessary for the perpetuation and nurture of the human race. Eve in Eden, Penelope in *The Odyssey*, the miller's daughter in the Grimms' fairy tale, the Wife of Bath in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*—all have sat at their looms, giv-



ing texture, pattern, color, shape, and sanity to a world where men went out to fight, conquer, carouse, philander, explore, and exploit. But underneath the lovely tapestries, familiar quilts, and serviceable fabrics of women's carefully constructed surfaces, an internal war has raged in their psyches and souls—something about destiny and vocation, something about revolution and change. Often, this inner world is not a pretty sight—the fragmented, stormy, misguided and utterly unpredictable innards of an ordinary woman in search of an extraordinary vision and purpose. And so women learned to thread their dreams and sorrows through the needle's eye—to busy their nimble fingers and to quiet their yearning hearts by the simple, primeval device of producing something practical, warm, comforting as thick stews and fluffed pillows. Unable to “make” themselves, they “made” an image or an icon of home and hearth. And then they waited for something to happen—someone to rescue, shape, or create a self from the tattered scraps of their unused, secret fantasies, crazy quilts.

Certainly, in the nineteenth century, the culture had little doubt as to how a woman should spend her time. In Mary Lynch Johnson's *A History of Meredith College*, she writes that the curricula at several female academies were “considerably” altered from those of male institutions: “French was usually substituted for the ancient languages, and ‘polite literature’ for mathematics. Music, drawing, and needle work were added.” In the South, Dr. Johnson says, the superiority of males was “‘chivalrously sugar-coated’ . . . by the idea that woman was too delicate a creature to undergo the rigor of a real education” and would be



Ellen Brewer House

better served by pursuing "the ornamental branches of education." But surprisingly, at Meredith College there existed a vision for women that went beyond the domestic realm. In 1914, students were required to take fourteen hours of home economics and thirty-five hours in "the regular college literary course." In addition, they could "elect eleven hours in the literary, art, and music courses." The domestic arts were strongly emphasized but not entirely at the expense of courses in other academic disciplines. Katherine Parker, '10, was the first head of the home economics department, and Laura Bailey became an instructor the next year. At that time, "four hours of textiles replaced four elective hours for students in home economics." After the home economics department was organized in 1914 under the leadership of Katherine Parker, a series of several heads briefly held the position until the arrival of Ellen Dozier Brewer, '18, who, after completing two years of graduate work at Columbia, assumed the headship in 1922.

Miss Brewer was oddly but happily positioned to bring an unusual depth and vision to the home economics department. She had majored in Latin and

Greek and, according to Dr. Johnson, "her rare qualities of character and personality" gave students "a pattern of gracious living." Marilyn Stuber, who became acting head of the department two years after Miss Brewer's retirement in 1966, says of her association with Ellen Brewer, "I taught with her one year. She imparted a philosophy and feeling about Meredith—a wholesome role model. She gave me free rein."



But though Dr. Stuber was encouraged to be innovative, she recalls that the department was still devoted primarily to teaching students the traditional skills in "elegant entertaining" and sewing. She says, "When I came, it was stitching and stirring. We've been working hard to live down that stereotype for years. My goal has been to keep our program and curriculum up to date."

The home economics department has changed dramatically in recent decades. Dr. Stuber says, "In the past, the thrust was on preparing students to be homemakers. Now, home economics has differentiated into careers under the 'umbrella' of home economics." Students may specialize in child development, interior design, clothing and fashion merchandising, and foods and nutrition. With these specialties, home economics majors are well able to find a variety of interesting, lucrative careers and work settings. For example, there are two concentrations in food and nutrition: institutional foods and restaurant management. And students majoring in interior design can look forward to working in commercial settings as designers and planners. Dr. Stuber adds, however, that



"women still want it all—the home, the family, and careers." The numbers of students majoring in home economics has grown steadily, with the most popular areas being child development and interior design. In 1990, there were approximately one-hundred graduating seniors, more than in any other of the fifteen departments at Meredith. "We have flourished," Dr. Stuber says.

Another significant change is the recent demise of home management residence at Meredith. In 1960, the Ellen Brewer House was completed, the result of a gift





of \$62,000 from Talcott Wait Brewer, first cousin of Ellen Brewer. The gracious two-story house gave students majoring in home economics a chance to perfect their domestic skills in a "real" home setting. However, new trends in the field have created a need for a major change in the function of the Ellen Brewer House. Students have lived in the house since its construction, but that practice ceased in 1991. Dr. Stuber says, "Nobody could have anticipated the day and time when home management residence would be discontinued." She suggests that in keeping with national trends away from home management residence the Ellen Brewer House has been converted to a child-care facility. Dr. Stuber says, "Research points out that the best place to care for infants is in a home setting. We have made the Ellen Brewer House a demonstration home, staffed with professional child-development personnel." The facility is self-supporting, with parents paying for the care of four infants and four toddlers. "It is a demonstration laboratory for our students," Dr. Stuber adds.

Though the Ellen Brewer House no longer serves as living quarters and training for home economics students, Hunter Hall remains an "excellent" classroom and laboratory facility. The only "problem"—certainly a happy one in times of shrinking student populations and rising costs of education—is lack of space. Perhaps the return to traditional values has influenced some students in their choice of a major in this burgeoning field. And certainly the range of career possibilities is appealing—whether the student chooses to become a hospital dietitian, an elementary-school teacher, or a designer for a major corporation. Trends in health-conscious fitness, in more elegant and sophisticated urban environments, and in psychological emphasis on early education have made this department at Meredith a popular one. However, since change is more often cyclical than linear, the road to progress inevitably leads home again—back to the stove, the stew, the thimble finger, and wispy nostalgia of an earlier time.



Maybe so, Aunt Lily. But—and this is strange—I’ve almost felt called to something special, but I don’t know what. You know how God spoke to Moses through the burning bush? Sometimes burning bushes and morning stars seem to fight for my attention. I have no idea what I’m supposed to do, but I know it starts with learning all I can.

But carrying me all the way through to graduation was Papa’s whisper as he boarded the trolley on Blount Street. ‘Jenny,’ he said. ‘You’re still our morning star.’ Next morning, before day, I slipped outside in my nightgown to find the star in the dawn-gray sky.

— Carolyn Covington Robinson
Parable of the Morning Star

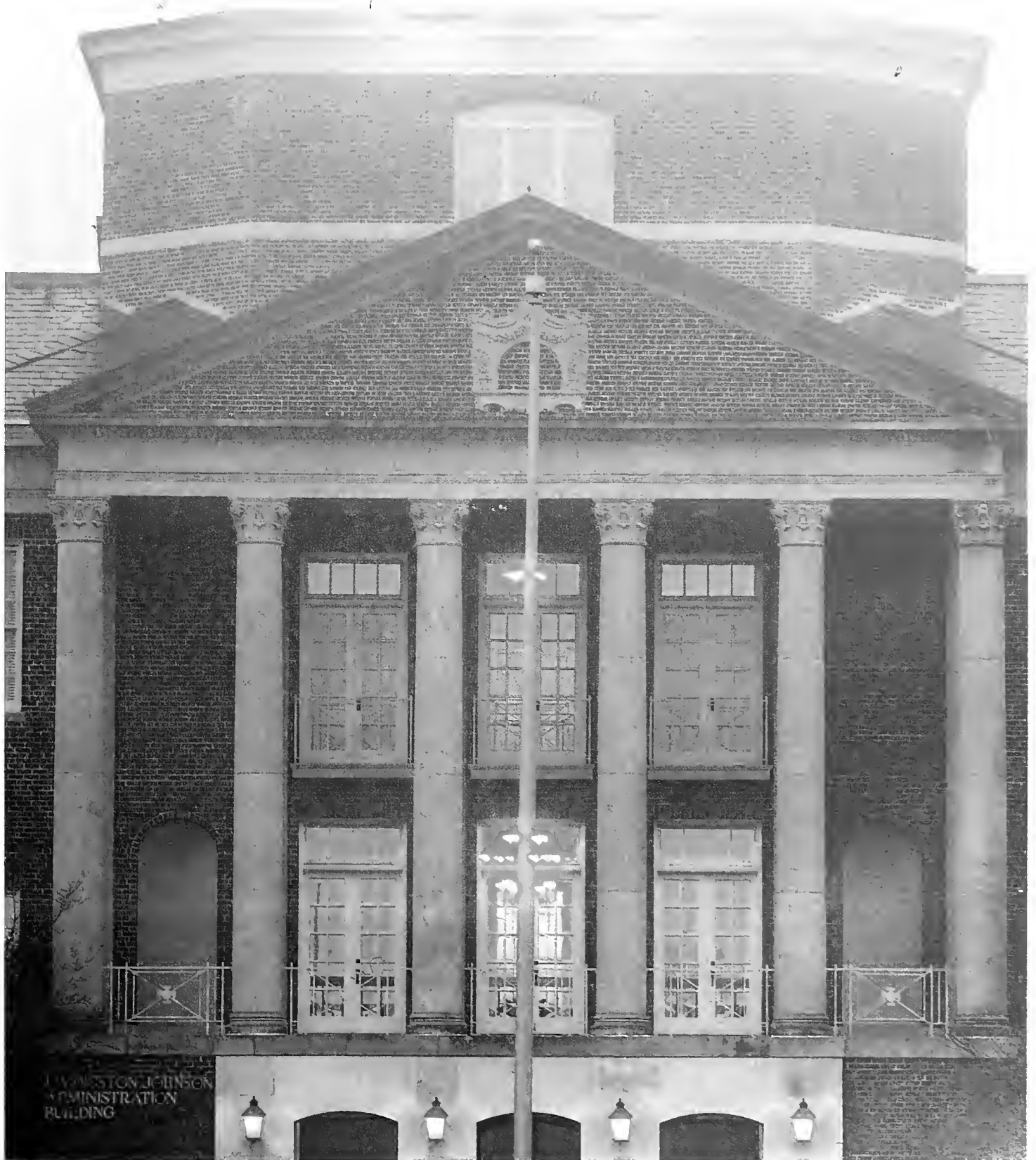


To commemorate the one-hundredth birthday of Meredith College’s founding, Carolyn Covington Robinson, ’50, wrote a play performed by Meredith students and faculty on the first day of the Centennial celebration. The central character is a mountain girl named Mary Jennifer Jordan—who dreams, reaches, and sighs for worlds beyond her knowing; glimmerings at the edges of her soul. Jennifer wants to go to college, a daring wish for a young North Carolina mountain child in the unenlightened days of 1897. Jennifer is restless with the same vague, unsatisfied longing that plagues other fictional heroines—and many “real” life heroines as well. Oliver Larkin Stringfield—tireless fund-raiser for the newly envisioned Baptist Female University to be built in Raleigh—spends the night with the Will Jordan family and changes Jennifer’s life with his impassioned argument for the education of women.

Stringfield’s visit gives shape and clarity to the star of young Jennifer’s imagination. She resolves to go to the university, despite disgruntlement and discouragement from a father whose ways are the old ways, whose mind is closed to stars and burning bushes



President John E. Weems



Johnson Hall



1999 Middlebury College Centennial Commission

alike. She goes off to distant Raleigh, with a wardrobe of homemade clothes and a copy of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poems—presented to her by the comically aphoristic Aunt Lily. And in 1902—after four years of study, homesickness, fear, delight, and wonder—Jennifer at last takes her imaginary place among the "Immortal Ten"—the young women who comprised the first graduating class of the Baptist Female University, which became, in 1904, the Baptist University for Women and, in 1909, Meredith College. Jennifer is symbolic, of course. Her passion for learning and her commitment to risk and challenge are characteristic of all Meredith women who have overcome obstacles to arrive at their own commencements. She is, as Richard Tilman Vann once wrote of this institution, "the incarnation of an idea."

So are we all ideas, dreams, longings made flesh. And, with poet Robert Browning, we celebrate the tangible world of bodies, roots, trees, stars by acknowledging the incorporeal souls, minds, and emotions that drive us to action and fulfillment. The word "commencement" is perhaps a misnomer. The ceremonies on this important day are seldom either an



end or a beginning, except in some crisply official sense. This ceremony is only a way station, a resting place between birth and forever. The graduating senior is on a continuum of experience that, if the light in her soul is right and real, will shine throughout eternity. And the seniors lined up in caps and gowns to listen to the invocation, prayers, and speeches of officialdom are wise to look higher and farther than this moment to the trees beyond, the skies above. What Shakespeare says of love could also be said of knowledge, of commitment, of truth: "... it is an ever-fixed



The Immortal Ten, first graduating class of Baptist Female University, 1902

mark, / That looks on tempests and is never shaken; /
It is the star to every wandering bark."

Thus, to graduates gathered in the McIver Amphitheater for Meredith's annual Commencement, what seems like the first day of the rest of their lives is only another day—like all the miraculous days that have come before and will come again. Sunrises and sunsets are the measures of a life lived well, of a life lived in harmony with the cycles and rhythms of minutes, hours, days, seasons. The landmark ceremonies are essential but ultimately arbitrary—very like the pauses of sailors to check their compasses, to adjust their sails, to utter their fervent prayers for calm seas, for a benevolent Providence. And then, like the sailors, the graduates must move on—as mortals always have and always must—to the next star.

As these graduating seniors move along the continuum of their lives, a light—Meredith's cannily appropriate motto—remains to direct the paths of others. Poet Stephen Spender acknowledges the light the great ones leave behind as they press on toward the sun: "Born of the sun they traveled a short while towards the sun, / And left the vivid air signed with



their honor." After the campus empties, after the relatives and friends disperse, after the graduates move slowly out into the world—the air is indeed "vivid" with the spirits of those who have come before and will come again. This vital air is life and health to all who dare to breathe it. This particular light is a benediction on all who dare to stand within the circle of its radiance.



















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Native North Carolinian Chip Henderson has been photographing his home state for the last fifteen years. His professional career began with summer internships at the North Carolina Department of Commerce, and he is now president of Henderson, Collins and Muir, Inc., a Raleigh-based photography studio and publishing house.

Official photographer and publishing consultant for *Images: A Centennial Journey*, Chip Henderson is known for the works he has published as well as for the photography he has produced. A recent project was *The Big Click*, a book which features scenes of North Carolina and its people in their daily activities during a specified 24-hour period in April 1989. More than 1,500 amateur and professional photographers responded to the invitation to make this the largest photographic event in North Carolina history.

Henderson's work is annually recognized by the Triangle and American Advertising Federations. Industry-wide acclaim has come from *Communications Arts*, *Print*, and *Art Direction* magazines, from Printing Industries of America, and from the American Institute of Graphic Arts.

Other photographers whose work appears in this book include Steve Wilson; Carolyn Hill; Wortham C. Lyon, Jr.; Jean Jackson; Bill Norton; Tory Chisholm; Bob Allen; and the late Harry E. Cooper.

Additional copies of *Images: A Centennial Journey* should be ordered from the
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